

Beat: Travel

## Government Pleading With Citizens

### To Stay Home and Social Distancing

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 11.04.2020, 19:59 Time

**USPA NEWS** - At this moment, the number of COVID-19 cases in Canada is 23,318. The breakdown by province is as follows: British Columbia 1,445, Alberta 1,569, Saskatchewan 289, Manitoba 243, Ontario 6,648, Quebec 12,292, New Brunswick 112, Prince Edward Island 25, Nova Scotia 428 and Newfoundland 241.

On Friday there were 34 new cases COVID-19 confirmed in Nova Scotia, which was the largest jump in one day since the beginning of the pandemic. This after Premier Stephen McNeil had the sad task of announcing to Nova Scotians that the first two COVID-19 deaths had taken place in the province earlier in the week. With the ever-growing numbers of virus cases and the first two fatalities, Premier McNeil and Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health are pleading with residents to stay home and practice social distancing. On this Easter long weekend, all levels of government are urging Canadians not to attend Easter gatherings in person, but rather find creative ways to be with family and friends such as using Skype or other forms of video chat. That said, officials acknowledge that the majority of Canadians are doing the right thing by practicing self-isolation and social distancing, but there are still those that refuse to follow these rules which put not only themselves at risk, but also risking the health and safety of us all. Premier Stephen McNeil has said that those that refuse to comply will be faced with monetary fines or could face jail time.

Throughout this pandemic, there are many folks that are considered to be essential services and must go work to provide necessities that the community can't survive without and by doing so put themselves at risk. Many examples come to mind such as doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, police, firefighters, paramedics, retail workers, truck drivers and public transit drivers.

While first responders and medical staff are often most visible, but public transit drivers are the ones that get everyone safely to their place of employment to enable them to help others. However, public transit workers also face the risk of exposure to COVID -19 during this pandemic.

As previously reported on March 29, a Halifax Transit maintenance worker had tested positive for the virus.

Halifax Transit vehicles have exempted from the social gathering and physical distancing rules as buses are considered to be an essential service, which has many bus drivers expressing their concerns to their union. Kenny Wilson, President of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 508, said in a news release, "We are seeing buses fully loaded with passengers forced to sit side by side, without any physical distancing at all. People will get sick. This level of bus loading will not flatten the curve. The membership as a whole is completely stressed out and is feeling fearful, anxious and worried." Upon investigation, the employee was deemed not to have been in direct contact with the traveling public and all public health protocol was followed by Halifax Transit in dealing with the situation.

However, on Wednesday, April 8th, a Halifax Transit bus driver had tested positive for COVID-19. A spokesperson for the Halifax Regional Municipality said in a media release, "The driver hasn't been in the workplace since Saturday, and all workspaces and vehicles the individual was in contact with have already been cleaned as part of Halifax Transit's enhanced protocol. Public Health is working with Halifax Transit and has been in contact with the individual who tested positive. HRM says, "Public Health will complete contact tracing to identify anyone who has been in close contact with the driver. Public Health will contact those who are required to self-isolate and will test anyone they feel needs to be tested." Ken Wilson, President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 508, has called for buses to be pulled off the road during the pandemic, but transit has been deemed an essential service under Nova Scotia's state of emergency. The union is also urging Halifax Transit to enforce strict load limits in order to slow down the spread of COVID-19 and also asking for transit service to be limited to essential service workers only.

Dr. Robert Strang, was asked about the transit situation during a news conference in Halifax Wednesday afternoon. He said that he could not speak to the specific details in the bus driver's case, but strongly stated that public transit is a necessity for many. Strang went on to say, "We continue to look at transit and being able to do that as safely as possible, but we also have to acknowledge that for a significant portion of our community buses are essential. We have people that need to get to work and not everybody has the luxury of being able to drive, or it's not short enough that they can walk."

As the long weekend commences, the Provincial Government reports 34 new COVID-19 in Nova Scotia, which is the largest one day spike in the province. The Mayor of the Halifax Regional Municipality, Mike Savage reminds Haligonians that last weekend there were

39 people who were ticketed around the Halifax region for not self-isolating, not practicing social-distancing and being in areas where they shouldn't have been.

Savage is pleading for co-operation for the weekend ahead and said, "Instead of looking for creative ways to circumvent the rules, let's follow them."

All levels of government are adamant when they say that following the rules is the only way that we can stop the spread of COVID-19 and have life go back to normal.

#### **BREAKING NEWS**

Saturday April 11, 2020. A second Halifax Transit bus driver has tested positive for COVID-19. On Friday evening, Halifax Transit was made aware of the positive test.

Halifax Transit reports the driver who tested positive has not been in the workspace since March 31. Since then, as part of Halifax Transit's enhanced protocol, all workspaces and vehicles the individual came in contact with have undergone cleaning.

LATE DEVELOPING STORY. A Halifax police officer has tested positive for COVID-19.

On Saturday afternoon, Halifax Regional Police were advised that one of its members contracted the virus.

Police say the officer who tested positive has not been in the workspace since Sunday. Since that time, all workspaces and vehicles, with which the employee was in contact, have already undergone cleaning as part of HRP's cleaning protocol.

#### **Article online:**

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-16816/government-pleading-with-citizens.html>

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