



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	March 14, 2024
SUBJECT:	Total Solar Eclipse on April 8, 2024 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	John Summers Acting Director, Tourism and Culture Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

The purpose of this Communication Update is to advise Council that on Monday, April 8, 2024, from approximately 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm, Hamilton will be one of the few Southern Ontario communities that will be in the path of a total solar eclipse, known as “the path of totality.” The path of totality is a narrow corridor approximately 100 to 115 km wide in which the sun appears to be entirely covered by the moon for a short period. People in the path of totality will be able to see sun features that are generally not visible during this period. Proper eye protection is necessary.

A total solar eclipse is a rare event. The path of totality may pass over a location only once in a person's lifetime. The 2024 total solar eclipse has secured the top spot on The New York Times' list of "52 Places to Go for 2024," with "The Path of Totality, North America" being a must-see destination. Based on experience, events of this nature can draw substantial crowds.

It is important to note that viewing this event is weather-dependent, and the eclipse will not be viewable if cloud cover is present.

A cross-departmental Solar Eclipse Planning Committee has been formed, bringing together key stakeholders from various City departments to prepare for the solar eclipse. The committee's primary goals are to ensure public safety, protect the well-being of City employees, welcome tourists, attempt to mitigate disruptions to traffic and city services and maintain emergency response preparedness.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Given the anticipated influx of visitors to Hamilton, preferred viewing sites are being established to help ensure a safe and orderly experience for all attendees.

These preferred viewing sites have been selected based on their capacity to accommodate large crowds, accessibility features, availability of amenities, and suitability for eclipse viewing. By directing visitors to these locations, the City aims to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and memorable experience for all attendees while minimizing disruptions to traffic and city services.

The preferred viewing sites for the eclipse will include:

- Tim Hortons Field;
- Bayfront Park;
- Pier 4 Park;
- Confederation Park and,
- T.B. McQuesten Park.

City staff are taking this approach to help manage the anticipated visitor surge from other communities and direct them to areas that can accommodate crowds. Many parks are not scheduled to be open on April 8, and without proper supervision, there is a potential for damage to parks, especially sports fields.

Implications of Hamilton being in the path of the eclipse include the following:

- Likelihood of an influx of visitors to the Hamilton area from nearby regions that are not in the path of totality such as Toronto;
- Media and public attention;
- Unsanctioned gatherings and viewing parties to parks and areas not designated by the City as viewing areas;
- Traffic congestion and delays from those visiting Hamilton or travelling to other communities in the path of totality for the eclipse, such as Haldimand and Niagara; and,
- Eye damage from improper viewing may occur and could impact health services.
Note: impact on eyes generally appears 12-24 hours after the eclipse.

If viewing the eclipse, proper personal protective equipment is required. Viewing glasses that meet the international standard ISO 12312-2 are considered safe for viewing an eclipse. The Physics Department at the University of McMaster has purchased an ample supply of ISO 12312-2 glasses and allocated a minimum of 100,000 pairs to the City of Hamilton.

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On the day of the eclipse, staff will be on location at the preferred viewing sites to distribute free ISO 12312-2 glasses to attendees. Free ISO 12312-2 glasses will also be made available to the public at City of Hamilton recreation centres, civic museums, Hamilton Public Library locations and the Tourism Hamilton Visitor Experience Centre during the weeks leading up to the eclipse.

At this time, the City of Hamilton will continue with operations as usual during the eclipse. City employees will be able to work safely during the eclipse provided they follow directions given to avoid looking at the sun. Communication regarding appropriate health and safety measures will be shared with employees. Of note, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Boards have declared April 8 a Professional Activity Day and will close all schools that day.

In the coming days, City staff will be taking the following steps to communicate pertinent eclipse details to the public:

- Create a page on the City of Hamilton website providing residents and visitors with information about the eclipse and how to view it safely;
- Begin pushing key messaging and information through the City of Hamilton's corporate channels, including social media; and,
- Welcome visitors to safely experience this event and promote complementary tourism offerings through Tourism Hamilton's channels to maximize the economic impact of this opportunity.

Any questions or comments can be directed to Ryan McHugh, Manager, Tourism and Events, by email at Ryan.McHugh@hamilton.ca or by phone at (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4132.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Not Applicable.