

Subject: COVID Update – July 2021

To: Council

From: Chief Administrative Office

Report Number: 2021-207

Meeting Date: July 26, 2021

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Department Report 2021-207 be received for information.

Purpose:

This CAO generated report is provided as a follow up to the COVID-19 pandemic update that was provided to City Council on June 28, 2021.

Background:

The City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 13, 2020 by bringing together the City's Emergency Control Group (ECG). The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the nation and the City continues to prepare, respond, and plan recovery from the impacts of the pandemic to the municipality. As described in a previous staff report, the City's response is based on four principles:

- Maintaining essential City services to the community throughout the emergency;
- Continuing to ensure the safety and security of the public and City staff;
- Ensuring the organization remains financially stable throughout COVID-19; and
- Continuing to remain consistent in the City's actions with the actions of other agencies.

In order to respond appropriately to the impacts of the pandemic and adhere to these principles, the City's response has been divided into three phases:

- First phase – initial response and precautions for users and staff
- Second phase – maintaining essential services

- Third phase – recovery and reopening

Currently, the City is in the third phase, recovery and reopening, as staff continue to execute plans that were developed for reopening the City's programs, services, and facilities.

Discussion:

Since the time of the last COVID Update to Council there have been two changes in the Province's pandemic recovery plans. First, the Province moved to Step 2 of the "Roadmap to Reopen" on June 30, 2021, earlier than originally planned in response to favourable vaccination statistics and other public health conditions. Step 2 brought relaxed restrictions on indoor and outdoor gatherings and retail and hospitality businesses.

Subsequently, on July 16, 2021, the Province advanced to Step 3 of the recovery framework. This step includes even more reduced restrictions including, as in Step 2, increases in gathering limits, retail shopping, and indoor dining.

At this point, staff believes the Province will enter an additional Step, as yet unnamed, beyond Step 3 approximately 21 days after the July 16th date that began Step 3. At the July 12, 2021 Council Meeting, Council approved Report 2021-108 – Community Update on City Facilities and Programs which identified the operating status of a number of City facilities, amenities, and programs. The City's leadership team and Emergency Control Group continue to meet regularly to plan the safe reopening of these municipal services.

Financial Implications:

While the pandemic has had financial impacts on the City in 2020 and 2021, there are no new financial impacts since the most recent report to Council. City staff project a balanced budget for 2021.

Public Engagement:

The City continues to provide high-quality communication to the community by giving frequent updates of City initiatives and sharing information from other agencies such as the Federal government, the Provincial government, and the Region of Niagara and Niagara Region Public Health.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiatives contained within this report support the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Service and Simplicity - Quality and Innovative Delivery of Customer Services
 - Value: Financial Management to Achieve Financial Sustainability
 - Governance: Communications, Engagement, and Decision-Making
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Conclusion:

The City's Emergency Control Group continues to meet during the pandemic to make operational decisions for the City's programs and services in order to maintain essential operations within the community. Staff will continue to report to Council for the duration of the pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.