



Subject: COVID Update – February 2022

To: Council

From: Chief Administrative Office

Report Number: 2022-42

Meeting Date: February 22, 2022

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2022-42 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 January 25, 2022.

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

Recently, the City is in the third phase, recovery and reopening, as staff continued to execute plans that were developed for reopening the City's programs, services, and facilities. More recently, the City has moved back to the second phase – maintaining essential services – as the emergence of the Omicron variant and the associated increase in case numbers has required the City to institute further precautions designed to ensure that there are adequate numbers of City workers to maintain services to the community.

Discussion:

In the time since the last report to Council, there has been little in the way of changes to the operating environment for municipalities as it relates to the COVID pandemic.

The Province has a planned reopening framework that has milestones that are scheduled for February 21 and March 14. These measures include easing of restrictions that affect public gatherings and indoor capacity limits in certain private sector settings. There are some measures that impact City operations such as recreational activities, the City is fully compliant with Provincial regulations as they pertain to municipal operations.

The City is continuing to administer a recovery framework as it pertains to the workplace that governs precautions in place to prevent the spread of COVID among employees at work. It is expected that these precautions will continue to be eased as restrictions ease in the Province as a whole.

At this point, staff intend to cease providing a monthly COVID update to Council unless there are particular impacts on the City's operations. Management will continue to provide a weekly update to staff and Council via email.

Internal Consultations:

The City's Emergency Control Group continues to meet on a regular basis during the pandemic. From time to time, staff from other departments are present at these meetings to discuss reopening of City programs and amenities including recreation facilities and programming, cultural services, and access to City buildings.

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, a financial report for the fiscal year ended on December 31, 2021, will be presented at a future Council meeting.

The 2022 Budget has been approved by Council and staff expect to end the year in a surplus position despite the continued financial impacts of the COVID pandemic.

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 initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Service and Simplicity - Quality and Innovative Delivery of Customer Services
 - City-Wide Investments in Infrastructure and Recreational/Cultural Spaces
 - Value: Financial Management to Achieve Financial Sustainability
 - People: Supporting and Investing in Human Capital
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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,

Scott Luey
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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.