



Subject: COVID Update – April 2021

To: Council

From: Chief Administrative Office

Report Number: 2021-131

Meeting Date: April 26, 2021

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2021-131, be received.

Purpose:

This CAO generated report is provided as a follow-up to the COVID-19 pandemic update that was provided to City Council on February 22, 2021 and the further verbal update that was provided on March 22, 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 last report to Council, COVID cases in Ontario have been increasing. In response to the increase in cases, the Province has announced a 'shut down' that is similar to the Grey/Lockdown level of the recovery framework and took effect on April 3. The shut down, also known as an 'emergency brake' is intended to slow the increase in case numbers and is in place for a minimum of four weeks. A week later, the Province announced another 'stay-at-home order', again for a duration of four weeks, that took effect on April 8. The City has recovery plans that are tailored to each level of the Province's framework and staff will implement these plans and continue to monitor Provincial announcements.

Vaccination Clinics

As reported at the March 22 Council meeting, mass immunization clinics in Niagara started at the end of March with the first clinic in Port Colborne being early in April. These clinics are administered by Niagara Public Health but take place in the Vale Health & Wellness Centre (VHWC); the City is an active partner in offering the clinics to the community. The City has supplied support staff and the City's Fire Department has attended the clinics to distribute masks that were donated to the City to members of the public. At the vaccination clinics in May, the Fire Department will distribute donated hand sanitizer to members of the public receiving their vaccines. By all accounts, the vaccine clinics are very well run, and staff are receiving many compliments on the orderly nature of the vaccine clinic and compliments on the VHWC from those who are visiting it for the first time.

Water Sample Testing

Residents of Port Colborne who rely on wells for drinking water in their homes typically have their well water tested through a water quality test provided by the Region. This service was suspended in 2019 due to COVID. Through discussions with City staff, the Region, and the Township of Wainfleet (where residents also rely on this service), staff were able to restore this service in March. Instructions on accessing this service during the pandemic are available on the City's website.

Community Events

As the City continues to operate in the recovery and reopening phase of the pandemic response, City staff and the ECG continue to monitor and evaluate the ability to operate municipal programs and services. Part of this exercise is determining whether it is realistic to resume City-organized and third-party organized community events. Based on this analysis, staff have determined that all events are suspended until July 1, 2021. Some limited events with restricted access, such as fishing tournaments, will be permitted to take place provided that COVID-19 prevention measures and precautions are in place and Provincial regulations permit events to proceed. Staff suspect that it is unlikely that the Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival will not take place, the Canal Days Committee continues to discuss the event and a final recommendation will be before Council for a decision before June 15, 2021.

Financial Implications:

The City's 2021 budget was prepared to allow the City the flexibility to continue to navigate through the pandemic while continuing to provide all municipal services without putting the City in a deficit position. In March, the Provincial Government announced additional COVID relief funding for municipalities and Port Colborne qualified for \$505,536 that will be used to mitigate the cost of the City's response to the 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.

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
Chief Administrative Officer
905-835-2901 ext. 306
Scott.Luey@portcolborne.ca

Report Approval:

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