
MEMORANDUM

CSC-C 16-2020

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Corporate Services
Date: September 9, 2020
To: Corporate Services Committee
From: Todd Harrison, Commissioner of Corporate Services and Regional Treasurer

Corporate Services delivers efficient and innovative service excellence to external and internal customers in an integrated and timely manner.

During this pandemic, our staff have continued this support function for core businesses within our group and for operating departments. In addition, Corporate Services has provided critical support to the Emergency Operations Committee (EOC).

The following provides an overview of activity that has taken place and a projection of expected service delivery moving forward.

CONSTRUCTION, ENERGY AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (CE&FM)

The CE&FM group is divided into two main groups, Construction and Facilities Management. This Team continues to be an essential component of the Region's EOC. Some of the functions performed in this capacity are:

- Maintaining Vine Portal for EOC supply chain requests allowing for increased efficiencies and tracking of delivery;
- Coordinating the sourcing of essential supplies in collaboration with other departments;
- Continuing Operations and Maintenance of all opened facilities including enhanced cleaning protocols to ensure safe working environment for essential staff not working from home;
- Coordinating emergency procurements of PPE and other supplies that are critical to business continuity for essential services;
- Coordinating shipping/receiving and securement of critical supply needs;

- Providing dedicated and secured storage areas to assist LTC pandemic supply requirements;
- Upgrading facilities with social distancing barriers, protective screens;
- Responding to internal client needs for changes in normal operations, special moves and health & safety concerns;
- Providing enhanced security monitoring of sites with reduced and or no staff on site; and
- Redeployment of CE&FM staff to support REOC and facilities operations.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

Construction:

- Continue to work with contractors on construction sites for work that resumed as of mid-May.
- For projects not in construction, staff is proceeding with procurement for projects deemed to be critical to proceed.
- Working with OH&S, determining what physical changes are required to re-open Regional office locations to the public.
- Completed installation of glass/plexi barriers at SAEO Niagara Falls and Welland for public waiting areas.
- Working with communications, developed new Region floor decals and signage for physical distancing. Decals are installed at Welland POA Courts, SAEO offices at Niagara Falls, Welland and St. Catherines and partial installation at Niagara Region HQ based on operational need.
- Working with dental clinics to review air exchange requirements in order to resume in person appointments.

Cleaning:

- Staff has extended the current enhanced COVID cleaning requirements for facilities managed by CE&FM and EMS stations.
- Renegotiated cleaning contract to extend for another 6 months based on right sizing operations to meet PH guidelines.
- Procured additional cleaning and janitorial supplies to meet divisional and client needs.
- Addressed multiple emergency workplace disinfection requests following positive COVID findings in the workplace.

Supply Chain and Deliveries

- Dedicated staff for delivery and reception of all Region Headquarters deliveries to loading dock to limit personnel entry to Region Headquarters.
- Have met all client and division's support requests for procurement of PPE, hygiene and cleaning supplies.
- Sourced N95, cloth and surgical masks for use by region staff based on operational needs.

Building Security

- Continue to monitor security and facility access control systems to meet program delivery needs.
- Continue to keep all Region sites functional, safe and secure for eventual return to normal operations.

Non-essential maintenance and repair work

With opening up of maintenance and repair work by the Province in early May, continue with critical maintenance repair work and services and any other work required for the efficient building operations.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING (FMP)

Current Status of Operations

As indicated, all of the Corporate Services Departments continue to deliver core services while at the same time perform a significant number of duties to support the Regional EOC.

FMP staff have continued to support core business functions during the pandemic. Some highlights of these actions include:

- Complete the 2019 year end audit;
- Submission to the Province of the 2019 Financial Information Return
- Publication of the 2019 Annual Report
- Develop 2020 tax bylaws and provide required necessary report and bylaws; and
- Work with Public Works to update financial implications of SNF water treatment plant for inclusion in the 2021 budget; and

- Publication of the 2020 Budget Summary
- 2021 budget planning and preparations.
- Successful sale of \$34 million in serial debentures (\$15.5 million Regional) on July 31 at all time historical low interest rate of 1.43% for 10 years.
- Preparation of 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets timetables and planning report for Council and establishing strategies for budget preparation.

Additionally, FMP has a main role in the Region's EOC as part of the Finance and Administration Unit. Highlights include:

- Development and implementation of procedures for cost reporting and tracking;
- Coordination and collaboration with municipal treasurers of assumptions and information for consolidated financial impact information for advocacy to provincial and federal governments;
- Review of Regional capital projects in light of provincial legislative essential construction business and Regional capacity to complete;
- Implementation of on-line/credit card payments for services such as business licenses, garbage bag tags including direct sales to residents, planning and transportation permits, long term accommodations, etc.;
- Support HR in development of cost tracking system to facilitate staff redeployment to essential services in pandemic including update of EOC costing assumptions at end of second quarter.
- Support HR in establishing process to administer pandemic pay. Finance is leading completion of significant additional reporting requirements for various different Ministry;
- Extensive cash flow and collections analysis and planning in conjunction with local municipalities;
- Analysis and reporting related to Council motion to consider deferral of 2020 water/wastewater budget increases; and
- Preparation of COVID-19 recovery planning documentation and consolidation of corporate plan.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Managing Local Area Municipality receivable and payables in accordance with CSD 31-2020.

- Improvements to Cash Flow model tools and processes to support ongoing operations and cash flow implications of municipal COVID concessions.
- Ongoing COVID financial analysis and weekly/monthly impact and cash flow reporting to Council with updates for items impacting 2021 budget to be added.
- Provincially funded Program Financial Audits underway to comply with legislation.
- Second and third quarter financial reporting to Council in accordance with policies.
- Supporting the 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets preparation including establishing new processes to integrate Capital Asset Management Resource Allocation model integration with Capital Financing Strategy.
- Supporting GO implementation, Niagara Regional Transit Governance, Canada Summer Games, Airport Master Plan RFP, sponsorship revenue, sustainability review, Asset Management Planning
- Securing HST advisory services to minimize HST impacts on Canada Summer Games construction costs.
- Creation of Development Charge Bylaws RFP.
- Financial and implementation analysis for HRIS support and alternative models.

PROCUREMENT AND STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS (PSA)

Current Status of Operations

Similar to other departments within Corporate Services, PSA staff have delivered by supporting core business functions while taking on additional projects to support the Region's EOC.

Highlights of activity during the operational period includes:

- Facilitating new and ongoing procurements culminating in award;
- Realty related works for inflight projects, leases and licenses;
- PeopleSoft Change PO's, Supplier and PCard administration; and
- Sourcing critical PPE and supplies needed for the EOC response to the pandemic.
- Preparation of Covid-19 recovery planning documentation.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

The Region's review of essential projects both capital and operational has resulted in a prioritization of formal procurements moving forward. This will continue throughout the pandemic and afterwards.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (ITS)

Current Status of Operations

Similar to other departments within Corporate Services, ITS staff have delivered by supporting core business functions while taking on additional established projects to support the Region's EOC.

Highlights of initiatives completed during the pandemic include the following:

- Assisted Wainfleet to consume a hosted REST service from Niagara Region in their new EVOLTA software which is used for building permits and other planning needs.
- The ESRI ELA negotiations were finalized and the contract signed. This now brings Niagara Region and most LAMs (except St. Catharines, Lincoln and West Lincoln) onto a common platform for GIS. All participating organizations have their own ArcGIS Online subscription which can facilitate secured sharing and collaborating with spatial data and web mapping applications.
- Supported a variety of COVID-19 reporting requests including:
 - Public COVID metrics, including re-opening metrics and break down by municipality;
 - Public COVID Info-Line Wait Times;
 - SAEO Intake – to assist in assessing the impact of CERB etc. to their call volume and intake load;
 - Customer Service Call Volume – to assess the impact on dispatch with forwarding all HQ call attendant calls to dispatch; and
 - Public Health COVID Response Tracking – to assist Public Health with managing their response to the pandemic.
- Implemented a customized homelessness reporter solution for community services outreach workers. Allows outreach workers to collect details about

homelessness in the community. The results are collected in a back end “Activity Manager” to QA/QC the data and assign work to resources and a front end “Activity Reporter” to provide a dashboard glance of the results.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Continued support for COVID-19 initiatives while supporting and enabling staff to work from home. Prior to COVID-19 daily average for the number of remote connections was approximately 90 users, current daily average is 1270 users.
- Ongoing updates to the screening questions used by EMS in their tool ‘EMS Tools’
- Ongoing COVID-19 data analytics including internal operations supports and external data visualizations - Launched enhanced stats on external website including municipal breakdown.
- Implemented technology and processes to accommodate electronic public participation in Council and Committee meetings.
- Went live with the “Homelessness Reporter” for Community Services that will allow staff to track and monitor homeless in Niagara.
- Automated Public Health EOC status report for daily briefing and Ministry submission.

LEGAL SERVICES

Current Status of Operations

As indicated, all of the Corporate Services Departments continue to deliver core services while at the same time perform a significant number of duties to support the Regional EOC.

The Legal team provides a key role in the Region’s EOC. The team provides ongoing support and advice in particular related to the interpretation and implementation of new provincial legislation and Emergency Orders that have been issued throughout the pandemic. Highlights of advice provided in this regard:

- Advice and legal support related to the development and implementation of the Region's face covering by-law;
- Advice related to impact of emergency orders on construction to ensure the continuation of essential Regional capital projects and help minimize pandemic-related project costs and disruptions;
- Risk management advice on building screening and security issues; and
- Advice related to recovery planning/reopening of Regional facilities.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

The Legal team continues to provide advice and deliver services to operational departments on core business activities. The team also continues to provide additional support for REOC and Covid-related matters as required with the majority of the team working remotely.

COURT SERVICES

Current Status of Operations

The Court Services team is overseen by the Region's legal department on behalf of the joint board of management, between the Region and area municipalities.

Highlights of operational changes to Court Services:

- Closed to the public.
- Providing service via telephone and email to individuals.
- Also providing onsite service for enforcement agencies related to filing charges.
- Direction from the Ministry of the Attorney General has been received indicating that all in-person matters have been adjourned to September 11, 2020.
- Beginning July 6, judicial pre-trial matters and early resolution guilty pleas began remotely where eligible, before a Justice of the Peace via audio or video conference. The first week of remote matters was a great success as a result of planning efforts by the Court Services Team. Remote processes were easy to navigate by defendants and agents, with 276 out of 300 scheduled early resolution matters being resolved in the first 3 days.

- Awaiting further information re: potential legislative amendments that would increase capacity to complete matters remotely, such as paperless/electronic documents, expanding the use of telephone and video for matters.
- Continued collaboration with Facilities and Corporate Health & Safety to prepare for reopening utilizing the Recovery Secretariat Guidelines which have been provided by the MAG.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

Continue responding to public enquiries and requests from enforcement agencies while awaiting resumption of regular court proceedings.

ASSET MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Current Status of Operations

AMO staff have continued to support core business functions during the pandemic. Some highlights of these actions include:

- Assist Departments with the Risk and Corporate Priority evaluation of the 2021 Capital Budget.
- Planning and leading the development and submission to the Province of the 2021 Asset Management Plan in accordance with Reg 588.
- Participating on the Public Health initiative to develop a Health Impact Assessment methodology to apply against the Region's capital projects.

Additionally, AMO has redeployed 2 of 5 staff to support the Regional response to Covid-19.

Projects to improve the Region's Asset Management System (AMS) require participation and collaboration from staff across the organization. Given the impact of COVID-19 on divisional plans and resources, the ability of Region staff to focus time on the AMS projects is limited and will have further impact on the schedule of 2020 projects. The schedule assessment will occur in the next 1-2 months in parallel to the decisions made on staffing and resourcing as part of the Recovery Planning.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

The Asset Management System development projects that are underway (Priority 0) and those planned in the coming months (Priority 1) are tabled below. These projects are directly related to the requirements of the 2021 Asset Management Plan.

Table 1: Asset Management System development projects

Priority	Service availability by Phase	Project
0	PNM	Region AM delivery structure ID 112
0	PNM	AM program foundations ID 430
0	PNM	CAMRA - Risk Management Framework ID 248
0	M	Develop data analytics capabilities- Microsoft BI ID 530
0	PNM	Develop AM performance management KPIs ID 410
0	PNM	Niagara Region AM working group ID 512
0	PNM	Process for preparing the AM Plan ID 210
1	PNM	Capital planning process ID 262
1	PNM	Enterprise Risk Management Framework ID 249
1	PNM	Develop Asset Registry - hierarchy and relationships ID 242
1	C	Project Resource Estimating - cost model ID 310
1	PNM	2021 AMP ID 630

Notes: PNM: No changes but delivered differently - e.g. working remotely

C: Cancelled pending redeployed/ staff vacancies are filled

Other planned 2020 projects not tabled above, and that have only an indirect bearing on the 2021 Asset Management Plan, or are related to supporting Niagara's local municipalities are also on hold until staffing issues have been resolved.

BUSINESS LICENSING

Current Status of Operations

Similar to the other departments in Corporate Services, the Business Licensing unit has continued to operate with core service delivery as well as play a role in the Region's EOC. These activities are identified separately.

Business License

- Continuance of issuance of licenses.
- Developing office protocols for future public intake by appointment only.
- Investigating permanent eCommerce licensing sales.

Provincial Order Enforcement

The provincial government's announcement for stricter enforcement of social distancing and business' temporary closings resulted in an enhanced bylaw enforcement. In cooperation and coordination with local municipalities, the Region's enforcement team has increased its how's of operations to respond to increased complaints.

- Staff have been re-assigned to enforce the Provincial Orders and remain assigned to an evening shift schedule Saturday to Tuesday supported by staff from Tobacco Enforcement. Staff remain assigned to this until further notice or when the orders and state of emergency is lifted; and
- Staff respond to after-hours calls to assist the local response and also monitor the Region's six public open space properties, and ensure Region licensed businesses that are non-essential remain closed.
- Order enforcement for the Re-opening Ontario Act.
- Face covering bylaw enforcement including education.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

The Regional Enforcement Manager will continue to work in cooperation with local municipalities, NRPS and other Regional departments in a coordinated approach to enforcement of the social distancing legislation until the pandemic eases.

The business license bylaw review is ongoing and will likely come before Council after the pandemic eases.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Todd Harrison, CPA, CMA
Commissioner of Corporate Services and
Regional Treasurer