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**MEMORANDUM**

**CSC-C 22-2020**

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

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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, Welland, St. Catharines, Fort Erie, and Port Colborne 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.
- Completed 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.
- Increasing inventory of critical PPE supplies for fall flu season (including anticipation of second wave).

#### *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;
- Work with Public Works to update financial implications of SNF water treatment plant for inclusion in the 2021 budget;
- 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;
- Reported to Council on the second quarter financial results and year end forecast;
- Completion of Service Sustainability Review project and reporting to Council; and
- Update of Standard and Poors credit rating, reaffirming the Region's AA stable credit rating.

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 ongoing update of EOC costing assumptions;
- 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;
- Preparation of COVID-19 recovery planning documentation and consolidation of corporate plan; and
- Complying with reporting requirements for \$12.8 million in provincial Safe Restart funding and submission of application for funding of Phase 2 funding along with the completion of additional COVID-19 extraordinary cost claims and reports to various Ministry.

## **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.
- Third quarter financial reporting to Council in accordance with policies.
- Ongoing financial reporting submissions for pandemic pay and COVID-19 extraordinary cost claims including Phase 2 of Safe Restart due November 6.
- 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, Asset Management Planning.
- Securing HST advisory services to minimize HST impacts on Canada Summer Games construction costs.
- Creation of Development Charge Bylaws RFP and new Development Charge Policy regarding payment instalment options and related interest.
- Financial and implementation analysis for HRIS support and alternative models.
- Coordinating debenture issuances with infrastructure Ontario for Region and Area Municipalities.
- PeopleSoft configuration changes to report to Council on sole source procurements in excess of \$100,000.

## ***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;
- Sourcing critical PPE and supplies needed for the EOC response to the pandemic; and
- 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:

- Support for onboarding the 2 new WM collection contractors - modifications and enhancements to various applications were required to support this initiative.
- Implemented a public facing website with automation of the application process for qualification of Specialized Transit services offered by Niagara Region.
- Modifications to EMS Tools to adhere to recently revised Ministry of Health regulations for Incident reporting.
- Modifications to HSMS (Hauled Sewage Management System) for WWW to enable GIS/mapping services connectivity, data capture for Source locations, enhance search capabilities, enhance filtering capabilities and usability.
- Modifications to various web applications to support the AODA 2021 compliance regulations.
- Security enhancements to ChildCare EReg to further safeguard sensitive data.
- FOI Application upgrade to stay current with security and functionality offered by the vendor.
- Produced a LAM specific visualized Power BI COVID report for public health resources to deliver weekly to each Mayor and CAO and other requested senior staff
- Assisted the City of Thorold by producing economic development maps to be used with prospective clients/developers for the City. Five different maps were produced in total.
- Produced a data solution for school outbreak COVID reporting in the EOC (both EOC's)
- Begun working towards implementing a long term data solution for public health COVID information and contact tracing.

## **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 support to operational departments on core business activities, including risk management and insurance advice and litigation support. The team also continues to provide additional support for REOC and COVID-19 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:

- Facility reopened to the public effective September 14, 2020 for counter service only. Remote service continues to be leveraged wherever possible.
- Direction from the Ministry of the Attorney General has been received indicating that all in-person matters have been adjourned to at least January 25, 2021.
- Since July 6, judicial pre-trial matters and early resolution guilty pleas have been conducted remotely where eligible, before a Justice of the Peace via audio conference.
- Commencing October 19, 2020 all non-trial remote matters will be conducted remotely where eligible, before a Justice of the Peace via audio conference.
- Amendments to the Provincial Offences Act made pursuant to Bill 197, the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020, received Royal Assent came into effect July 21, 2020. These amendments will enable Court Services, in

consultation with the judiciary, to make greater use of technology to deliver justice services remotely. These updates include:

- Allowing defendants to request a trial, in early resolution courts and in first attendance municipalities that administer parking, by mail or other electronic method permitted by the court house;
  - Allowing defendants and prosecutors to conduct early resolution discussions remotely in all cases; and
  - Allowing any participant, including a clerk of the court, witness, judge, or justice of the peace, to attend any proceeding remotely by audio or video, unless the presiding judicial official orders otherwise.
- Court services is well equipped to deliver these services remotely, and has begun to do so, based on extensive preparation for remote matters in addition to the modern technology available onsite at the courthouse facility. Further guidance is pending from MAG regarding electronic protocols to enable further transition to remote proceedings.
  - Continued collaboration with Facilities and Corporate Health & Safety to prepare for resumption of in-person court matters, utilizing the Recovery Secretariat Guidelines which have been provided by the MAG.

## **Operational Outlook**

### **1/3/6 months**

Continue to provide customer service support remotely wherever possible, and in-person via counter service where required. Continue to conduct eligible remote court matters electronically while awaiting resumption of in-person court proceedings.

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT OFFICE**

### **Current Status of Operations**

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

- Planning and leading the development and submission to the Province of the 2021 Asset Management Plan in accordance with Reg 588.
- Initiated development of a corporate Asset Registry focusing on the asset hierarchy to support the 2021 AMP.
- Continuing development of the Region's Enterprise Risk Management Framework.

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

The recruitment process for 2 of the 5 staff vacancies has been completed.

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. A schedule assessment indicates the majority of planned 2020 projects are now delayed while some are on hold due to the previous staffing levels.

AMO staffing issues – vacancies and redeployment – have been resolved or will be soon. This will permit more of the planned improvement projects to start and completed. However, there will be an impact to the overall 5-year plan. This impact will be evaluated and addressed over the next two to four months.

### **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	Current status	
			Project
0	PNM	Delayed	Region AM delivery structure ID 112
0	PNM	Delayed	AM program foundations ID 430
0	PNM	Pilot completed	CAMRA - Risk Management Framework ID 248
0	M	Delayed	Develop data analytics capabilities- Microsoft BI ID 530
0	PNM	Delayed	Develop AM performance management KPIs ID 410
0	PNM	Inaugural meeting set 13 Nov	Niagara Region AM working group ID 512
0	PNM	Initiated	Process for preparing the AM Plan ID 210
1	PNM	Delayed	Capital planning process ID 262
1	PNM	Initiated	Enterprise Risk Management Framework ID 249
1	PNM	Initiated	Develop Asset Registry - hierarchy and relationships ID 242
1	C	On hold pending resource evaluation	Project Resource Estimating - cost model ID 310
1	PNM	Pending ID 210	2021 AMP ID 630

Notes: PNM: No changes but delivered differently - e.g. working remotely  
 C: Cancelled pending redeployed/ staff vacancies and resource evaluation

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 processing, and issuance of business licenses including fee payments and response to enforcement and inspection requirements.
- Developing office protocols for streamlined business licensing processes under COVID-19 restrictions.
- Investigating permanent eCommerce licensing sales and software database updates.

### Provincial Order Enforcement

The provincial government requires continued enforcement of provincial orders by municipalities. Business Licensing staff maintain availability for active enforcement and inspection measures for the orders and provide support to local municipalities and Niagara Regional Police.

- 3 staff have been re-assigned to enforce the Provincial Orders and beginning October 18, 2020 are providing 7 day a week coverage from 10:30 am to 8:30 pm. Staff remain assigned to this until further notice or when the orders and state of emergency are lifted. Hours of operation and days of service are assessed weekly and will be adjusted to meet demands and pressures.
- Staff respond to Provincial Order and Regional Face Covering By-law complaints to assist the local response and also conduct random compliance inspections. Staff also continue to ensure Region licensed businesses are following order requirements and adherence to the Regional Licensing Bylaw.
- Provincial Order enforcement, including education, for the Re-opening Ontario Act.
- Regional Face Covering By-law 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 Provincial Orders and Regional Face Covering Bylaw until the pandemic eases.

The business license bylaw review is ongoing and will come before Council in December of 2020.

## ***INTERNAL AUDIT***

### **Current Status of Operations**

Internal Audit recently completed an RFP for audit consulting services to review all non-competitive purchasing activity. This should be completed in the Q4 with a report coming to Audit Committee in late 2020 or early 2021.

Internal Audit is working with client groups and consulting with several jurisdictions to scope out cyber security and IT related audits to commence in the new year. Internal Audit is also updating the Management Action Plan report to be presented at the December Audit Committee meeting.

### **Operational Outlook**

#### **1/3/6 months**

As part of a more comprehensive operational strategy for the internal audit function a draft audit plan will be developed and presented to Audit Committee in the new year which will include a succinct risk assessment to identify and prioritize future audits for the next 2-3 years.

Internal Audit will present the results of the non-competitive procurement and commence work on the BioSolids value for money audit within the next 2-4 months.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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