
MEMORANDUM

CSC-C 13-2021

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Corporate Services
Date: April 14, 2021
To: Corporate Services Committee
From: Todd Harrison, Commissioner, Corporate Services/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:

- Sourcing, procuring, receiving and distributing emergency supplies, PPE and other supplies critical to business continuity for essential services and other departments;
- Providing dedicated and secure storage areas for LTC and PH pandemic and mass immunization program supply requirements;
- Continued redeployment of CE&FM staff to support REOC and facilities operations; and

- Supporting the Public Health mass immunization plan through logistics and operations: clinic setup, supply chain management, facility planning, coordination of service contracts and security and distribution of COVID vaccines and immunization supplies for mass immunization clinics.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

Construction:

- All capital projects at the Niagara Region are considered essential construction and were not affected by the Province's lockdown order of December 26. The Construction team continues to provide project management services and work with consultants and contractors to expedite capital projects deemed to be essential and critical for business continuity and in order to maintain services to the public;
- Continuing to upgrade facilities with social distancing barriers, protective screens and social distancing signage; and
- Responding to internal client needs for changes in normal operations, special moves and health & safety concerns.

Facilities Management:

- Continued operations of facilities / leased space managed by CE&FM (including EMS, GO/VIA, PW Patrol Yards, surplus properties, Courts, Community Services, Public Health, NRPS stations and Communications sites, Child Care, Regional HQ, PW Environmental Centre, and Business Licensing). Providing custodial, enhanced cleaning, security, contract management, preventative maintenance, repairs, utilities management and fire / life safety.
- Continuing enhanced cleaning protocols to ensure a safe working environment for essential staff not working from home;
- Continuing emergency workplace disinfection requests following positive COVID findings in the workplace;
- Continuing sourcing and procuring additional cleaning and janitorial supplies/services to meet divisional and client needs including renegotiation of enhanced cleaning contract based on right sizing operations to meet PH guidelines;

- Providing support for department and divisional requests for emergency procurement of PPE, hygiene and cleaning supplies and vaccination supplies;
- Maintaining inventory of critical PPE supplies for pandemic response;
- Continuing to monitor security and facility access control systems to meet program delivery needs;
- Continuing to screen all staff attending HQ for COVID safety;
- Implementing increased security for storing and distribution of vaccine supplies; and,
- Continuing with critical maintenance repair work and services and any other work required for 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 operating and capital budget planning, preparation and approval;
- 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;
- Reported to Council on the second and third quarter financial results and year end forecast;
- Completion of Service Sustainability Review project and reporting to Council;

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- Update of Standard and Poor's credit rating, reaffirming the Region's AA stable credit rating;
 - Creation of new Development Charge Policy regarding payment instalment options and related interest; and
 - Review of Niagara Region Financial Health.
 - Completion of the 2020 year end and reporting of the financial results to Corporate Services Committee
 - Completion of a Financial Condition review and report as requested by Budget Review Committee
 - Completion of a HST commodity tax review
 - Execution of a banking agreement renewal

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;
- Complying with the multiple and iterative reporting requirements to different Ministries for more than 24 new revenue streams for various Regional programs.
- 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 2020 pandemic pay.
- Extensive 2020 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
- Successful in application to Provincial Safe Restart Phase 2 for \$9.2 million in COVID-19 funding for 2020 and 2021 and on-going applications for other funding programs.

- Development of the mass immunization program budget to be reported to the Province by April 1.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Ongoing financial reporting submissions for COVID-19 extraordinary cost claims
- Supporting GO implementation, Niagara Regional Transit Governance, Canada Summer Games, Incentive Review, Airport Master Plan RFP, sponsorship revenue, Asset Management Planning, Niagara Regional Housing ASD, Vision Zero, Hospice Funding request.
- Beginning work on Development Charge Bylaw update with consultant and other teams involved in master plan updates.
- Evaluation of the HRIS RFP.
- Coordinating debenture issuances with infrastructure Ontario for Region and Area Municipalities.
- Supporting Procurement in actioning the recommendations from the non-competitive procurement audit.
- Analysis and reporting of 2021 tax policy decisions to set the 2021 tax rates.
- Completing 2020 financial statement audit, financial information return and annual report.
- Planning and strategy for the 2022 Budget.
- Updates to Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy.
- Financial system upgrades and improvements.

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.

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)

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:

- Published new version of web mapping application Niagara Navigator , built in our new Enterprise GIS Portal environment (late January)
- Made Enterprise GIS Portal environment available for self-serve use in the organization. This has empowered Planning and Economic Development resources to produce a mapping-centric Niagara Business Directory application for the public, scheduled to be released on www.niagararegion.ca by early April
- Devised a data solution for CoVax data collected during congregate living vaccination to Seniors and the impending mass immunization clinics and produced the corresponding PowerBI report changes for www.niagararegion.ca
- PH Mass Immunization clinic planning and prep – Working with the PH Pandemic planning team to evaluate IT requirements of Mass Immunization sites and help coordinate Internet access at sites with the LAM's.
- Call Centre As A Service – collaborative effort with Customer Service team to pilot and procure a CaaS solution through Avaya to help with our Customer Service call centres.
- Implemented Spear Phishing and Ransomware eLearning modules for all staff, and non-staff – i.e. contractors, vendors, volunteers, students, etc.

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- The conversion of 180+ SAEO staff over from Thin Client hardware to laptops to further enable Work from home on Niagara Region devices.
 - Updated external COVID reporting on website to simplify information and added vaccination data.
 - Provide support for Community Services in the onboarding of an online financial assistance application (OLAF).
 - Produced and/or iterated a variety of Power BI reports for Public Health as it relates to COVID, including:
 - PH and REOC dashboards;
 - The public COVID metrics on niagararegion.ca;
 - LAM specific report for public health to deliver weekly to each Mayor and CAO and other requested senior staff;
 - A repatriation report for HR and public health visualizing the COVID redeployment effort;
 - Outbreak COVID reporting;
 - Public COVID Info-Line and Online Chat Wait Times; and
 - Public Health COVID Response Tracking.
 - Additional Power BI reports were produced for:
 - 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
 - CAMRA Reporting for capital project budget decision making.
 - Produced a data solution for school outbreak COVID reporting in the EOC (both EOC's).
 - Devised and are continuing to implement a long term data solution for public health COVID information and contact tracing, including integrating with the Provincial CCM application.
 - Automation of the public daily COVID report publication which was manually completed 7 days a week for ~ 5 months.
 - Provided the Homelessness Reporter suite of applications to Community Services for outreach workers to use with the homeless during COVID.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Worked collaboratively with NH on rebuilding the application 'Transfer of Care' which will improve efficiencies and tracking in the life cycle of a patient beginning care with EMS up to the hand off (transfer) of care to NH.

- Support for HR on the Talent Map Survey regarding work conditions in the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Building an EMS data warehouse to help support their evidence based, clinical response model
- Building the mapping component of a situational awareness application for emergency management
- Develop a visualized PowerBI report for WWW's Niagara Weather Information System
- Continue 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.
- Implement and review technology and processes to accommodate electronic public participation in Council and Committee meetings.
- Automate Public Health EOC status report for daily briefing and Ministry submission as well as call center processes.
- Supporting Niagara Regional Transit and Canada Summer Games with technology planning and review.
- Provide support to Community Services in transitioning the services of 'Pro Kids' to the YMCA.
- Creating the ability for taxpayers to upload immunization records, which will increase efficiencies and accuracy of this PH data.
- Increased performance abilities in the application used to Permits, enabling efficiencies for Transportation staff.

LEGAL SERVICES

Current Status of Operations

As indicated for all of the Corporate Services divisions Legal Services continues to deliver core services, while at the same time providing a significant level of support in

response to the COVID-19 pandemic to the Region's EOC and all operating departments.

The Legal team performs a key role in the Region's EOC providing risk management and legal advice. The team provides ongoing legal support to the Region's EOC and operating departments in particular related to the interpretation and implementation of new provincial legislation and Emergency Orders that have been issued and updated throughout the pandemic. Highlights of advice and legal support provided include:

- Advice and legal support related to the implementation of the Region's mass immunization plan (including the development of agreements required for the 11 sites across the Region being used as COVID-19 immunization clinics);
- Advice regarding the preparation, communication and enforcement of the Region's face covering by-law;
- Advice related to impact of emergency orders on procurement and construction to ensure the continuation of essential Regional capital projects and to help minimize pandemic-related project costs and disruptions;
- Advice to Public Health to support the issuance of Orders under the Health Protection and Promotion Act;
- Legal support related to enforcement of and compliance with a broad range of regulatory requirements imposed in response to the pandemic;
- 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. Litigation and claims management have become increasingly active as Courts and lawyers adapt to pandemic constraints and remote working alternatives. 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:

- Court Administration & Collections staff are working onsite to provide customer service in person, via telephone and email, as well as conduct remote court matters as scheduled. Prosecution Staff are largely able to work remotely, except where attendance at the Courthouse is necessary (e.g. to support remote court proceedings).
- Direction from the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) has been received indicating that in-person Provincial Offences matters have begun to gradually resume across the province as of January 25, 2021. There has been ongoing collaboration with Facilities and Corporate Health & Safety to prepare for resumption of in-person court matters, utilizing the initial Recovery Secretariat Guidelines provided by the MAG. A successful site assessment by the Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) was completed on January 26, 2021, supporting the resumption of in-person court matters. While in-person matters have not yet resumed in Niagara, Court Services is presently awaiting official communication from MAG regarding next steps.
- Effective April 12, 2021, Niagara Provincial Offences will commence virtual Part I Trials via Zoom video. Part I trial matters are scheduled for April and May 2021. Training and reference documents have been completed for Court Services staff, judiciary, enforcement agencies and paralegal agent groups to assist with preparation for Zoom trials.
- Since July 6, 2020 judicial pre-trial matters and early resolution guilty pleas have been conducted remotely where eligible, before a Justice of the Peace via audio conference.
- Since October 19, 2020 non-trial remote matters have been conducted remotely where eligible, before a Justice of the Peace via audio conference.
- Court services is well equipped to deliver services remotely, based on extensive preparation for remote and virtual matters in addition to the modern technology available onsite at the courthouse facility. The Courthouse is now Zoom enabled (which is the video platform required by MAG) in 2 of our 3 courtrooms, which will support Court Services in conducting trials by video when permitted and staff are

engaged in the development of communication tools for the public to assist in this transition.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Launch virtual Part I trials via Zoom video effective April 12, 2021.
- Continued facilitation of hybrid service delivery - court matters via audio, video and in-person (to the extent possible).
- Continue to conduct matters where eligible via audio and video conference while awaiting resumption of in-person court proceedings and/or Part III trials via video.
- Ongoing recovery planning in collaboration with MAG and the Recovery Secretariat for resumption of in-person matters.

Ongoing site preparation for virtual matters via video – equipping the remaining courtroom to enable virtual proceedings in all 3 courtrooms.

ASSET MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Current Status of Operations

AMO staff continue to support core business functions during the pandemic. The immediate focus and resources commit to key activities as highlighted:

- Planning and leading the development and submission to the Province of the 2021 Asset Management Plan in accordance with Reg 588.
- Planning for the 2022 prioritization process for the 2022 capital budget, which also includes integrating Health Equity impact screening with Public Health
- Input to Development Charges update
- Input to Master Plans for Water & Wastewater and Transportation

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. This caused delay of projects in 2020. It is continuing to affect work in 2021.

The overall 5-year plan for asset management system (AMS) improvements is now out of date because of the delays caused by Covid-19. A new strategic planning process will finish in Q3 of 2021 with launch in Q4 of 2021.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

The Asset Management System development projects that are underway are Priority 1. These projects directly relate to the requirements of the 2021 Asset Management Plan.

Those planned but delayed pending requirements of other projects are Priority 2. This only applies to Region AM delivery structure ID 112, which is meant to support the ITS Electronic Content Management System project.

Those planned, delayed and placed On Hold are Priority 3.

Table 1: Asset Management System development projects

Priority	Service availability by Phase	Current status	Project
2		Pending ECM project status	Region AM delivery structure ID 112
3	C	On hold	AM program foundations ID 430
0		Pilot completed	CAMRA - Risk Management Framework ID 248
1	PNM	Underway	CAMRA 2021 update for 2022 capital budget
2	C	On hold	Develop data analytics capabilities- Microsoft BI ID 530
2	C	On hold	Develop AM performance management KPIs ID 410
1	PNM	Inaugural meeting held	Niagara Region AM working group ID 512
1	PNM	Underway	Capital planning process ID 262
1	PNM	Scope revised for 2021 AMP	Enterprise Risk Management Framework ID 249
1	PNM	Scope revised for 2021 AMP	Develop Asset Registry - hierarchy and relationships ID 242
2	C	On hold	Project Resource Estimating - cost model ID 310

Priority	Service availability by Phase	Current status	Project
1	PNM	Initiated and on track	2021 AMP ID 630
1	PNM	Underway	Asset Management System Strategic Plan (preliminary planning phase)

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

C: Cancelled pending redeployed/ staff vacancies and resource evaluation

Other previously planned 2020 and 2021 projects not tabled above, and that have only an indirect bearing on the 2021 Asset Management Plan, or related to supporting Niagara's local municipalities are also on hold until resourcing and Covid-19 related issues are resolved.

BUSINESS LICENSING

Current Status of Operations

Similar to the other departments in Corporate Services, the Business Licensing department continues to operate with core service delivery as well as playing a role in the Region's EOC and response to Provincial O.Reg enforcement. These activities are identified separately.

Business Licensing

- Continue 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 including the issuance of licenses at set times in the lobby of the facility.
- Implement an "on-line" licensing application process beginning with various driver licenses.
- Investigating permanent eCommerce licensing sales and software database updates. Currently using Region website ecommerce credit card payment options for license fee payments.

- Establishing industry specific contacts with various law enforcement agencies including NRPS, OPP, MTO, MOE and AGCO as well as local by-law enforcement agencies.
- Preparing for the procurement of a modernized licensing/incident/inspection/enforcement database with a projected Q3 2021 delivery.

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. They provide both random inspections and complaint driven inspections 7 days a week.

- Staff from Business Licensing have been re-assigned to enforce the Provincial Orders and are providing 7 day a week coverage. 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 are adjusted to meet demands and pressures.
- Beginning December 06, 2020, two staff Tobacco Enforcement have been assigned to augment Business Licensing staff assigned to provincial pandemic O.Reg. enforcement and inspection. These staff will be assigned to this detail until the end of March 2021 at which time their deployment will be diverted to Mass Immunization clinic security. Temporary Business Licensing Enforcement Officers will replace these redeployments after March 31st.
- 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, warnings, charges and summons for the Re-opening Ontario Act.
- Regional Face Covering By-law enforcement including education, warnings and summons.
- Provide Provincial O.Reg enforcement data to the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the local area municipalities weekly.
- Publically post general weekly inspection and enforcement statistics for O.Reg enforcement.

- Provide background justification for business closure orders that consistently fail to comply with Reopening Ontario Act O.Reg.
- Provide support for changing O.Reg stages of opening.

Mass Immunization Clinics and Vaccine Storage Security

- Beginning March 18th, staff from Business Licensing, Tobacco Enforcement and Environmental Enforcement were redeployed to provide vaccine escort to the clinics as well as security and customer service for the clinics.
- Recruitment for 6 Temporary Licensing Enforcement Officers began on March 15th. These staff will be deployed to assist with COVID-19 regulatory enforcement throughout the Region and augment vaccine escorts to the clinics and providing security and customer at the clinics.
- Security measures were implemented on March 10th at Region HQ to provide 24/7 security protection of COVID-19 vaccines. This security includes contracted security, CCTV monitoring, and access control to the area.
- The Temporary Security Specialist position is currently being recruited and once hired will provide assistance to the Manager of Business Licensing in providing security oversight and administration of staffing resources for security of vaccines and clinics.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- The Business Licensing Manager will continue to work with local municipalities, NRPS and other Regional departments and external agencies in a coordinated approach to enforcement of Provincial Orders and the Regional Face Covering Bylaw until the pandemic eases.
- The Business Licensing Manager is overseeing security measures surrounding COVID-19 vaccination clinics, delivery of vaccine to clinics and deployment of staff resources. The manager is working with an assigned NRPS liaison officer.
- The business license bylaw review is ongoing and will come before Council in June of 2021.
- The Business Licensing Manager is reviewing COVID-19 pandemic impacts on licence holders licensed by the Region.
- The Business Licensing Manager will be developing a “return to normal operations” plan for implementation when the pandemic measures ease.

INTERNAL AUDIT

Current Status of Operations

- Finalizing RFP scoping documents for planned audits for 2021 including two audits in IT – cyber security and penetration testing. Preparing all material related to these two audits including evaluation criteria, timing and client briefings.
- Researching additional audit areas that will be issued later in 2021 including contract/consultant management audit and BioSolids Audit.
- Developing testing criteria for follow up audit on the Corporate PCard program.
- Drafted scope for fall commencement of Consultant/Contracting Audit
- Reviewing and updating Audit Committee Terms of Reference to be presented at May 2021 Audit Committee meeting

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Proponent selection for audit on penetration testing and cyber security. Support fieldwork and act as liaison during audit completion of cyber audit.
- Working with client groups to prepare response back to Management Action Plan, report expected at May Audit Committee meeting.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Todd Harrison, CPA, CMA
Commissioner, Corporate Services/Treasurer