

Memorandum

CAO 10-2020 Appendix 7

Subject: Business Continuity Planning and Staff Redeployment Update
Date: April 23, 2020
To: Regional Council
From: Franco Meffe, Director, Human Resources

Regional Council has begun to receive weekly Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) updates that contain information on changes such as the Region's service delivery, and costs associated to the Region's COVID-19 measures. Additionally, you are receiving Report CSD 30-2020 COVID-19 Preliminary Overview of Financial Impacts dated April 23, 2020, which provides more detailed financial implications that have been established through internal cost tracking related to the emergency response, which includes all labour related costs.

The purpose of this memo is to provide Regional Council with an update on Business Continuity Planning, including staff redeployment, along with a summary of related activities to date, and a brief overview of impacts to staff attendance.

Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) are critical for ensuring that the Region can continue to function during an emergency. This includes emergencies triggered by hazards such as a pandemic, or things like fire and severe weather. No organization is immune to the impacts of an emergency; however, they are particularly important for government organizations like ours, which are considered to be forms of critical infrastructure under Ontario's Critical Infrastructure Assurance Program (OCIA). BCPs can help to ensure that the Region is able to continue providing essential and key services and maintain critical activities during an emergency.

Through the REOC, all Regional Departments prepared their BCPs identifying essential and key services delivery, what services must be maintained and what staffing levels are required to support these services. Essential Services are defined as a service, facility or activity of Niagara Region that is or will be, at any time, necessary for the safety, health or security of the public or a segment of the public, and/or Regional staff. These are the services that must be maintained during a serious disruption. Key Services are defined as a disruption or reduction in service does not affect health and safety of the public or Regional staff but it may result in the loss of expected functions/services, loss of revenue, legal exposure, or damage to the image of the organization.

It is important to note that the Region is required to account for human impacts that occur during a pandemic. The specific impacts on the Region will vary depending on the type of agent, transmission, vulnerable groups etc... However, in general the main risk to our organization is the threat of high levels of absenteeism (due to staff illness or caring for ill dependents or other family members) which can disrupt the provision of critical activities. It is also important to note that in some cases, individual risk perceptions may also result in some degree of absenteeism.

Other impacts may also include things such as supply chain disruptions. The degree of disruption and the types of goods and services disrupted will also depend on the specific situation and have been influenced by factors such as location of outbreaks, protective action measures etc. This pandemic, like prior similar incidents, have shown that particular supplies, such as medical supplies including masks, gloves, and disinfectant supplies may be more likely to experience shortages or disruptions.

The Region has continued to provide essential and key service delivery through their respective BCPs, including taking into account the shifting landscape over the past month with increased demand for staff resources in areas of our operations. This is due to increased COVID-19 absenteeism as a direct result of illness, or self-isolation due to things like travel, illness, or contact with another ill individual. Additionally, the Region has had to manage additional absenteeism due to leaves of absence for staff child or eldercare responsibilities, and restrictions in Long Term Care permitting work with only one employer.

The Region has shown leadership in preparing and delivering its respective BCPs by recognizing the need to prepare for the impacts of this pandemic. Departments have shown commitment and support of the development, implementation, and maintenance of the BCPs to enhance the Region's resilience to any service disruption. During this pandemic, the priority has been to maintain essential and key services. BCPs have identified the following:

- a. The number of staff currently assigned to deliver the essential and key services.
- b. The minimum number of staff assessed to be able to deliver the essential and key services.
- c. The number of staff likely to be available to deliver the essential and key services taking into account up to a 40% reduction in staff levels due to absenteeism (as recommended by Emergency Management best practices in an influenza pandemic).

Each Department has developed a BCP by Division for all essential and key services within their Department. It is important to note that BCPs also include an assessment of the potential increase in demand for any activity of work during an outbreak or pandemic that takes into account will demand for this critical function/service increase with less staff to deliver it.

The plans also include the order in which non-essential services, followed by key services activities will cease to be delivered if the situation warrants and how these same services will be restored as the situation improves. The development of BCPs has also identified those staff who are not directly associated with essential or key service delivery, as a result these staff are identified as eligible for redeployment to support other areas of operations with greater need for additional resources.

Redeployment of staff has already commenced within Departments where staff have moved within their normal Division of work and those staff who have crossed Divisions. In addition, staff redeployment is increasing cross-departmentally to areas that have been identified as requiring a greater need of staff resources, some examples include: EMS Logistics, Seniors Services Long Term Care Homes, Homelessness, and Facilities. Staff are being redeployed to services deemed as Priority 1- Essential as outlined in respective BCPs, including in accordance with collective agreement and/or terms and conditions of employment provisions. To date, the Region has had excellent collaboration between unions as witnessed by the cross functional placement between union roles across the organization.

To support the staffing of essential and critical services the Region, through collaboration between HR and IT staff, we have created an online COVID-19 Redeployment Tool. The purpose of this tool is to provide a platform for People Leaders to request additional people resources to be redeployed to them from other areas of the corporation, in order for them to maintain required staffing levels.

The primary focus for this Redeployment Tool is functions or activities deemed Priority Level 1 – “Essential” as per the REOC BCP Document. However, it is recognized that some Priority Level 2 “Critical” functions require support as well. In addition to HR staff conducting at a minimum weekly workforce planning with each Department, People Leaders are able to submit requests for additional redeployable staff that is reviewed against the Priority level in the BCP. These requests are actioned accordingly by a Redeployment Advisor who prioritizes requests for additional people resources based on where the need is greatest, compared to the qualified resources available.

Additional supports were also provided to all People Leaders and redeployable staff; these include a comprehensive user guide, procedures, outgoing and incoming manager checklists, training/orientation requirements, FAQ documents, and conversation planners to support both managers and staff with redeployment. There have been a number of staff redeployments to date; the following Table 1 provides a summary of staff redeployment information as at April 4, 2020:

Table 1 – Staff Redeployment Activity

Staff Available for Redeployment:	191.2
% of Staff Available for Redeployment:	6%

Staff Redeployed:	83.5
% of Staff Redeployed	3%

Staff Supporting REOC	23
Staff Supporting PH EOC	27
Staff Supporting EMS EOC	16
	66

Total Staff Redeployed: (Including EOCs)	149.5
Total % of Staff Redeployed (Including EOCs)	4%

Notes:

- 1. Total Number of Redeployable Staff reflects data as at April 4, 2020*
- 2. Data is from PPO7 (March 8 to 21) and PP08 (March 22 to April 4)*
- 3. Active staff count totals 3327 for this period, it excludes employees on leave of absence*
- 4. Staff Supporting EOCs includes Full-time and Part-time support*

As of the date of this report, the Region is focusing on greater redeployment to assist in other areas of our business where a greater need currently exists, namely Seniors Long Term Care Homes, and Homelessness. The next phase of the Redeployment Tool is to collect additional information from redeployable employees on their skills, credentials and certifications. As of April 20, 2020, a survey is being sent to all staff who have been identified as redeployable; staff will be invited via email from HR to complete an online

survey to gather additional information about their skills, credentials and certifications that will be completed securely strictly for the purposes of redeployment.

It is understood staff may be redeployed where the employee has the required skills, abilities, certifications, etc. to do the work and can perform the work safely following orientation. In more urgent circumstances where there may be a critical shortage of staff with necessary skills, abilities, certifications, etc. to do the work, redeployed staff may be provided any necessary training, education, and orientation to do the work and perform the work safely. The Region will continue to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of our employees, including managing any anxiety staff may have with redeployment to work areas they are not familiar with, including areas where there is a general feeling of higher risk associated with working there (i.e. Seniors, EMS, Homelessness).

The Region's primary goal is to redeploy staff as necessary to support continued delivery of essential and critical services. Employees who are not matched to a suitable redeployment opportunity, whether it is due to a lack of skill sets, qualifications, or certifications required, and/or the availability of a redeployable assignment, may be approved for a leave of absence or will be issued a layoff notice. Should this occur, these employees will be issued a Record of Employment to enable them to access options for income benefits from the federal government.

The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve at a rapid pace; we are now into the full implementation of our BCPs. This means that we are refocusing much of the work we do to essential and critical service delivery, in order to maximize our people resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have taken a number of steps concerning recruitment of new staff, including student hiring. The following Table 2 shows new employee recruitment starts that we have experienced in the past, along with what is anticipated to be new employees starting during the peak of this pandemic in 2020:

Table 2: Recruitment Activity

Year (March to June)	2018	2019	2020
Total Number of Recruits	323	347	78

Note:

1. For 2020, we still have 117 open positions that have not been filled as at this time; 98 (84%) of them are within essential service delivery areas of Community Services, EMS, and W/WW.
2. The activity does not include student hires – a number of hires were expedited in the above noted areas, including in certain cases start dates moved up (e.g. Seniors

Services). There have been a number of student positions cancelled or put on hold, only those deemed essential or key to service delivery have continued.

- 3. There are currently 50+ positions that have not been filled; they are currently being gapped, remain vacant, and have been captured as mitigation towards cost savings.*

The effect of this pandemic on our service delivery and to staff as individuals is unprecedented. The Region's operations have changed considerably where the sole focus has been on dealing with the impacts of COVID-19, including being completely dedicated to dealing with this crisis. In addition to employee's being redeployed to other services, employee's work environments have been modified, including a number of employees have moved to working remotely from home, or remaining at home due to specific circumstances.

As at April 4, 2020, we have 124 employees who are in self-isolation – due to travel, or being symptomatic, or contact tracing, etc...; approximately one-third of which are working from home. In addition, we currently have 469 employees that were on leave of absence (90% of these staff are in Community Services and Public Health/EMS); this represents a total of approximately 13% of all employees. Lastly, there were a total of number of 585 staff with sick time during this period. This has all had an impact on service delivery, particularly in the higher priority areas noted.

Next Steps

It is not clear what the duration of the COVID-19 response will be, we anticipate current conditions will persist at least throughout the second quarter. Staff will continue monitoring BCPs, redeployment, and recruitment activity against staff resourcing requirements to continue essential and key service delivery. Accordingly, similar updates will be provided as required.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Director, Human Resources