

Memorandum

CSC-C 9-2020

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Corporate Services
Date: June 17, 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)

Current Status of Operations

The CE&FM group is divided into two main groups, Construction and Facilities Management. This team has played an important role in the Regional EOC.

With the resumption of construction in Ontario, staff have been working with contractors to resume work at projects currently under construction. Most notably, construction for NRPS District 1 has re-started and staff is working with the GC to mitigate lost time. The following projects continued during the 1 month shut down as they were deemed essential services:

- Installation of backup generators at Headquarters;
- Transfer of backup 911 equipment to a new site; and
- Continuation of construction drawings for long term care facilities.

For projects not in construction, staff have determined which projects are deemed critical to proceed and prioritized these with Procurement.

The Facilities Management Team has been an essential component of the Region's EOC. Some of the functions performed in this capacity are:

- Coordinated 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;
- Upgrading facilities with social distancing barriers, protective screens;
- Responding to internal client needs for changes in normal operations, special moves and health & safety concerns;
- Enhanced security monitoring of sites with reduced and or no staff on site; and
- Coordinating shipping/receiving and securement of critical supply needs.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

Cleaning:

- Reviewing options for ongoing enhanced COVID cleaning requirements for facilities managed by CE&FM and EMS stations including extending existing cleaning contracts, adding temporary cleaning staff, retendering Region wide cleaning contract. Staff is working with Legal and Finance to determine best option.
- Continue to source/procure and secure additional cleaning and janitorial supplies to meet divisional and client needs.
- Facilities front-line staff continue to meet enhanced COVID cleaning requirements for internal staff and public safety.
- Have addressed multiple emergency workplace disinfection requests following positive COVID findings in the workplace.

Supply Chain and Deliveries

- Dedicated staff to deliver new enhanced screening signage from PH.
- Dedicated staff to delivery and reception of all Region HQ deliveries to loading dock to limit personnel entry to Region HQ.
- Sourced and provided secure storage areas to assist LTC pandemic supply requirements.

- Created Facilities tracking documents for EOC to track program delivery changes.
- Created Portal request mechanism for EOC supply chain requests.
- Have met all client and divisions support requests for procurement of PPE, hygiene and cleaning supplies.

Building Security

- Adjusted security and facility access control systems to meet program delivery changes with minimal notice and short timelines.
- Assisted with creation and testing of HR re-deployment tool in preparation of tool launch.
- Assisted with creation and testing of screening tool for PH and continue to support with coordination of access control systems data with screening tool.
- Continue to keep all Region sites functional, safe and secure for eventual return to normal operations.

Housing / Brock University

- Continue to manage unit allocations for temporary housing for essential service workers at Brock University - 27 rooms available with option of an additional 14 should they be needed.

Construction and non-essential maintenance and repair work

- With opening up of maintenance and repair work by the Province, have resumed critical maintenance repair work and services and any other work required for the efficient building operations.

REOC

- Continue to support the Region EOC with staff resources as required.
- Redeployment of CE&FM staff to support REOC and facilities 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;
- 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
- 2021 budget planning and preparations.

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, 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;
- Support HR in establishing process to administer and report on the provinces pandemic pay initiative;
- 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
- Publication of the 2020 Budget Summary.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

- Managing Local Area Municipality receivable and payables in accordance with CSD 31-2020.
- Phase 2 of on line payments i.e. garbage bag tags sales direct to residents.
- Improvements to Cash Flow model tools and processes to support ongoing operations and cash flow implications of municipal COVID concessions.
- Preparing Annual Report and provincial financial information return.
- 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.
- Preparation of 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets timetables and planning report for Council and establishing strategies for budget preparation.
- Supporting the 2020 Capital and Operating Budgets timetables as established.
- Supporting GO implementation, Niagara Regional Transit Governance, Canada Summer Games, Airport Master Plan RFP, sponsorship revenue, sustainability review.
- Managing debenture issuance process with consideration to market factors and municipal needs and risk.
- Creation of Development Charge and Community Benefit Bylaws RFP.

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.

In addition, Procurement has completed the transition to full eBidding and effective immediately, all procurement bid documents issued include the requirement for electronic submissions.

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:

- Put the tools, technology and processes in place to enable and support the move towards large numbers of staff working from home;
- Developed operational data driven dashboards for Public Health, Community Services and EOC to help monitor and manage workload and staff capacity;
- Developed staff redeployment portal to help facilitate the management of requests for additional or redeployed staff related to COVID-19 priorities; and
- Working with Clerks Department to move Council and Committee meetings to an all-digital platform to support physical distancing requirements.

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 has responded to significant number of new provincial legislation and announcements throughout the pandemic period. Highlights of advice provided to EOC:

- Advise on response to construction legislation related to essential services;
- Risk Management advice on building screening and security issues; and
- Various legal advice during pandemic.

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. In addition, the legal team is preparing the issuance of the Insurance RFP this month (targeting June 11).

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:

No update for courts – business remains the same.

- Closed to the public.
- Providing service via telephone and email to individuals.
- Also providing onsite service for enforcement agencies related to filing charges.
- Awaiting for 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.
- Also awaiting information re: potential July start-date for hearing guilty pleas on the record for Early Resolution via telephone.
- Awaiting some guidelines and resources related to reopening best practices and electronic court processes which we were advised by MAG today are in the initial draft phase.

Operational Outlook

1/3/6 months

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

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

- Revenues are down over the March, April and May period.
- Transition for business will need to be considered once the economy opens as these have been impacted. We have over 5,000 license holders that span businesses, vehicles and people.
- The emergency orders impacted not only the businesses but the employees of those businesses. There may be a reduced employee pool that these businesses may draw from and further impact their business operation.

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.

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