

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING OF JUNE 23, 2020
FROM:	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT:	COVID-19 – CITY OF LONDON SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the City Manager, the report dated June 23, 2020 entitled “Covid-19 – City of London Services”, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

BACKGROUND

At the end of the 2019 and early into 2020, news of a new strain of coronavirus began to emerge out of Wuhan, China. As the world has now come to know, coronaviruses cause respiratory infections to more severe diseases in humans. The most recently discovered strain is now known as COVID-19, and has caused a global pandemic that has shut down communities around the world.

This report provides an overview of the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the City of London, as well as a summary of service level changes that have been required as a result of restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of this virus.

DISCUSSION

When COVID-19 first became a concern for Canada, early communications with staff encouraged diligent compliance with all of the guidance coming from health officials. This included frequent hand-washing and hand sanitizing, sneezing and coughing into sleeves and encouraging staff to stay home if they felt unwell. As early as January, a small working group including the acting City Manager, Human Resources, Emergency Management and Communications was formed.

As the number of cases in Canada began to gradually increase, and, specifically, when London had its first case confirmed in January, the City’s efforts in response to COVID-19 increased. This included expanding the COVID-19 working team to representatives from all service areas, and participation in community-wide meetings about the potential impacts and appropriate responses that may be required.

In the weeks following London’s first case, efforts ramped up across all fronts. More frequent communications with staff reflected any additional guidance provided by health officials, and service areas began the process of updating and refining business continuity plans in the event the impacts of COVID-19 were significant, both for the organization and for the community.

State of Emergency:

By mid-March, it became clear to Canadians that the threat of COVID-19 was not only very real, but that it was also imminent. Recognizing that gatherings of any size increased the risk of spreading COVID-19 through contact, countless organizations began to follow the model of shut down that had already been enacted in other provinces.

On March 14, the City made the difficult decision to close facilities and cancel programs that could put residents and staff at risk. This included community centres, arenas, pools, recreation and sport programming, community rentals and March break day camp programs.

Within days, the Province declared a State of Emergency on March 17, allowing only essential businesses to operate. On March 20, the City declared a State of Emergency locally, marking the beginning of significant changes to City programs and services, and a reduction to delivering minimal operations and essential services only.

The City’s Approach:

Since COVID-19 first emerged as an issue, the City’s response has been guided by a set of principles. At the forefront has been the mission and values that have been set through the Strategic Plan for the organization.

Mission:

To be a responsive and modern public service partner that fosters change to build a better London for all.

Values:

- Good governance
- Driven by community
- Acting with compassion
- Moving forward with innovation


Guiding Principles:




Based on the mission and values, a number of guiding principles were defined very early in the City’s process to respond to COVID-19. These principles have served as the foundation for all that has been done throughout the time the City’s operations have been significantly modified. These principles include:

- Health and safety for residents and staff is a priority and is an ongoing commitment.
- Every effort will be made to minimize the harm to people and organizations impacted by decisions.
- Efforts to support economic recovery and those most vulnerable will be prioritized.
- A consistent, enterprise-wide approach will be taken.
- Communicating about service changes will be transparent, frequent and ongoing.

Commitment to Health and Safety:

Throughout its response to COVID-19, the City has maintained an ongoing commitment to the health and safety of its employees and residents. This has been a priority through the delivery of minimal operations and essential services and will continue. The following outlines the precautions the organization has taken to stop the spread of COVID-19:

<p>Health Screening</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active screening of employees• Active screening of clients prior to appointments and entry to City facilities• Passive screening posters at all entrances to City facilities• Signage outlining general health precautions posted at locations throughout City facilities
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<p>Physical Distancing</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricting the number of people in elevators • Staggered entrance/exit to and from City facilities for staff • Designated stairwells to ensure people are travelling only one direction (with the exception of during an emergency) • Restrictions on the number of people in meeting rooms and removal of chairs to help enforce this • Restrictions on the number of people in common areas • Directional signage to create one-way traffic in hallways • Installation of plexi-glass screens at customer contact points • Floor markings • Continued use of technology to support virtual meetings and interactions wherever possible • Remote working arrangements
<p>Sanitization and Frequent Cleaning</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced cleaning measures in facilities and vehicles • Frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces • Clean desk policy implemented to enable appropriate cleaning processes • Availability of sanitization wipes at all high touch areas
<p>Personal Protective Equipment</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of hand sanitizer • Provision of gloves • Provision of masks for employees • Provision of sanitizer wipes
<p>Modified Health and Safety Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of new Standard Operating Guidelines and Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines provides employees with detailed information to support them as they work in this new environment.
<p>Mental health Supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Assistance Program including virtual counselling services

Alignment with the Province:

All of the actions taken at the municipal level are meant to generally align with the recovery and restarting activities of the Province of Ontario. Decisions made at the Provincial level have a direct impact on the City of London's restart process. In particular, these include:

- Lifting of the Provincial orders
- Lifting of the Provincial Declared Emergency
- Reopening of programs and services at the Provincial level
- Guidance provided to support a safe and healthy process of reopening Provincially regulated services

The full Ontario framework can be found here: [Reopening Our Province](#).

As the Province moves through its three stage framework, the City will try to stay in step and work to restart programs and services that have been impacted by restrictions in place to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The full list of Provincial emergency orders can be found here: [Ontario Emergency Orders](#).

Staffing Impacts:

As a result of COVID-19, a number of services and programs are either not possible or restricted through Provincial order. This has had a significant impact on staffing at the City of London because there is work that is either not possible or not permitted. As a result, a number of employees that would otherwise have been working were either placed on a Declared Emergency Leave, or had delayed start dates. This includes:

- Approximately 200 full-time employees who were placed on a Declared Emergency Leave
- 31 students who had their contracts cancelled
- Approximately 1300 temporary and casual employees who had their start dates delayed or were placed on a Declared Emergency Leave

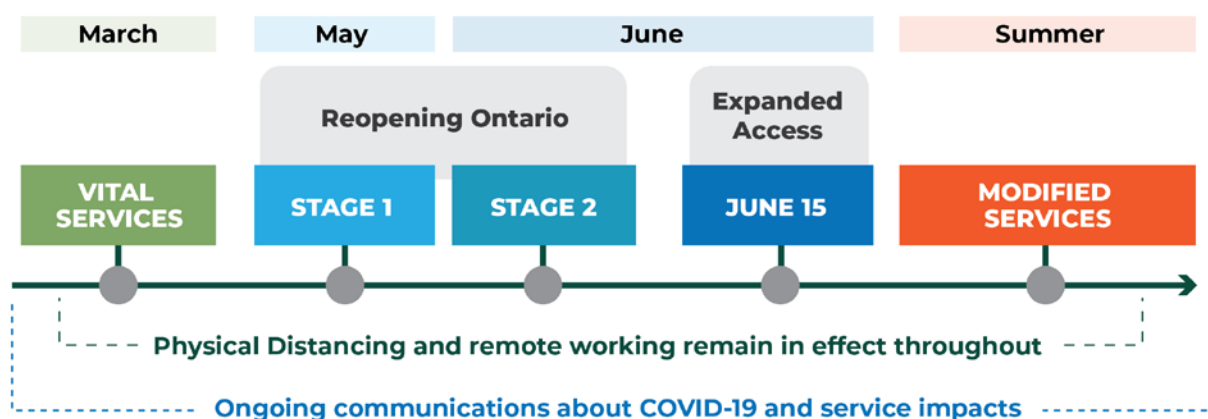
As the Province has progressed through its phased reopening, there has been a gradual return to work as additional staff are required to support City services that have restarted. Staffing decisions, however, continue to be balanced against the need to address a significant deficit in the City budget.

Ongoing Remote Work

Since the onset of COVID-19, the City has moved to a remote work environment, with the exception of those functions that require people to be in the workplace. Where there are administrative functions, there have been limited numbers of employees on site. This has been done in accordance with health guidance to stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and to maintain a physical distance of no less than 2 metres.

Over time, a limited number of employees have returned to their work spaces where the physical distancing requirement has been able to be met. Given this is a significant limiting factor for the foreseeable future, it is expected that a number of employees will continue to work remotely through to the fall. At this time, there are approximately 600 employees who are working remotely.

Service Impacts:



Vital Services (March):

While the City has suspended several programs and services throughout this time, a number of vital and essential services have continued. These include:

- Fire Services
- Emergency Management and Corporate Security
- Facilities Operations
- Traffic Services
- By-law Enforcement
- Building and Development Services
- Emergency Child-Care to support frontline health care workers and first responders (when permitted)
- Road Operations
- Park Maintenance
- Long-term care (Dearness home)
- Burial Permits
- Garbage Collection, Recycling, and Envirodepots
- Social Services (Ontario Works)
- Housing Services, Housing Access Centre (HAC)
- Homeless Prevention and Supports
- Water and Wastewater Services
- Property tax (online and by phone)
- Service London
- Internal support services such as Finance, Human Resources, Legal, Information Technology Services, and Communications.

As the City moved to minimal operations and essential services, efforts continued to support economic recovery and London's most vulnerable. Building and Development Services, with the exception of interior inspections, have continued since the State of Emergency was declared, with modified processes and digital interactions to protect health and safety. As well, additional supports including isolation spaces in hotels and comfort stations, were put in place for vulnerable people in the community.

Reopening Ontario – Stage 1 (May):

Prior to the formal announcement of Stage 1 of the Provincial reopening framework, some orders were lifted. As well, following the formal announcement of Stage 1, additional orders were lifted. Leading up to and with the formal announcement of Stage 1, the following City services restarted. These included:

- Outdoor sports fields and baseball diamonds (for non-programmed community use)
- Benches, picnic tables and park shelters
- Skate parks
- Basketball courts
- Tennis and pickleball courts
- Disc golf
- Golf courses
- Off-leash dog parks
- Community gardens
- Household Special Waste Depot and Landfill
- London Animal Care Centre

Reopening Ontario – Stage 2 (June):

On June 8, the Province announced that communities served by the Middlesex-London Health Unit were among those permitted to move to Stage 2 of the Provincial Reopening Framework. With this, a number of additional services were permitted to restart. The following are now permitted and have either been restarted, or plans to restart are in progress:

- Spray pads (June 12)
- Modified summer day camps
- Modified sports leagues and fields for training
- Modified programming and locations of opening of indoor and outdoor pools, and wading pools
- Some community centres (for day camp programs and current tenants only who offer programs that are in line with Provincial guidelines)

Modifications to ensure the City is able to follow all required health guidance will be made to each of these programs. As these services restart, the City will provide information to key stakeholders and to the public about the process and about how to access services.

As well, to support businesses who have been permitted to open during this stage, the City launched the Back to Business (B2B) team. This team pulls together services that may be required to support businesses as they make modifications, offering them a single point of contact to work with the City. The goal of this team is to be as flexible and supportive as possible.

Expanding Access – June 15:

Recognizing the importance of access to services provided through City Hall, a number of services became available in-person, including the following:

- Marriage licences
- Commissioning documents
- Burial permits
- MFIPPA requests
- Civil Ceremonies (with limits to the participants and two witnesses)
- Tree removal permits (by phone or online, with payments accepted online or in person)
- In-person building permit and business licensing inquiries
- In-person tax payments
- In-person payment of invoices

As well, beginning June 15, a number of services became available at 206 Dundas, by appointment. These included:

- Heritage alteration permits
- Development application consultations.
- In-person pre-application consultation meetings
- In-person application review meetings
- In-person engineering review meetings

Some public meetings also resumed in mid-June, including:

- Public Participation Meetings
- Public hearings
- Committee of Adjustment meetings

Modified Services (Summer):

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 creates a number of restrictions that pose challenges for many of the City's summer programs. As well, the current financial

situation also impacts the City's ability to deliver services. As a result of these factors, the following programs and services are impacted:

<p>Reductions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Works and Housing services will continue to provide minimal services with plans to scale up in the Fall dependent on direction from the Province • Supports for the London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership and the London Newcomer Strategy are reduced , as well some programming and events are delayed or cancelled for 2020 • There will be limited sporting events to support in summer 2020, pending further Provincial direction. It is expected that a reduced baseball, soccer and cricket season may occur in July and August. Sports fields are being cut to protect the investment in turf quality • Pools will be reopened in July with modified programming and locations • Community centre operations to be restricted to limited summer camps in July and August • Storybook Gardens restricted to limited summer camps only in July and August • Reduced service levels of grass trimming and reduced locations for annual flower planting • New sign programs, such as area speed limits, on hold • Walkway cleaning is suspended • All-way stop sign counts, traffic signal and pedestrian accommodation counts, traffic calming studies on hold unless deemed an imminent safety risk by staff • Sign replacements and other traffic management operations will have increased response times • Road maintenance (manhole and catch basin resetting) will have increased response times • Sidewalk, curb and gutter repairs (emergency only)
<p>Cancellations and Closures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Adult Day Program at Dearness Home will remain on hold through to the end of 2020 as a result of health guidance for the Long Term Care sector • The pools at Carling Heights and Oakridge will not open because these community centres are currently being used as assessment centres. If the assessment centres close, this will be re-evaluated. • All community centres will remain closed for all recreation activities (with the exception of those noted above) for the summer • Civic Gardens will remain closed until September • The annual Neighbourhood Decision Making program will be cancelled for 2020 • Neighbourhood Outdoor Movie Nights program will be cancelled this summer • River Road Golf Course will remain closed for the rest of the season • All arenas will be closed until September • Catty Shack will remain closed through the end of 2020 • Re-opening and scheduling of events at Centennial Hall will be contingent on Provincial direction regarding gatherings

Commitment to Communications:

Throughout this time, the City has demonstrated a commitment to communicating with the community about COVID-19 and about services that have been impacted. This has included the use of a dedicated web site, social media, signage throughout the community digital billboards, media releases and public service announcements. As well, targeted

communications such as direct emails, focused newsletters, and automated calls have helped provide residents with more detailed information about impacts of specific program cancelations. In March, the City also established a dedicated phone line and email to address concerns about COVID-19 and respond to questions.

Ongoing communications and signage, as well as daily updates from the City Manager, have also kept employees informed about changes to services, health and safety requirements, and modifications to work processes.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on City of London programs and services since March, when a State of Emergency was declared by the Province and also declared locally. Throughout this time, the City has responded quickly to changes to Provincial orders, restarting programs and services where it is safe and possible to do so. Looking ahead, the delivery of programs will continue to be impacted by the Province's progression through its Reopening Framework as well as the financial restrictions facing the corporation.

Decisions about how these impacts are reflected at the local level will continue to be guided by the principles developed at the onset of this event, and all health and safety precautions will be followed to help protect the well-being of the community and staff. As the City continues to move through the Provincial reopening framework, there will be ongoing communications to ensure the community is informed about services that are modified, reduced or cancelled as a result of COVID-19 impacts.

Financial impacts resulting from changes to service levels are addressed in the companion report 'COVID-19 Financial Impacts – Update' for Council's consideration.

RECOMMENDED BY:

**LYNNE LIVINGSTONE
CITY MANAGER**

CC:

Senior Leadership Team

Director People Services

Director Service, Innovation and Performance

Director Information Technology Services

Division Manager, Corporate Security and Emergency Management

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