

Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

To: Chair and Members
Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee
From: Lynne Livingstone, City Manager
Subject: COVID-19 – City of London Services Update (Spring/Summer 2021)
Date: April 27, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the City Manager, the report dated April 27, 2021, entitled “Covid-19 – City of London Services Update (Spring/Summer 2021)”, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

Since COVID-19 first emerged in the London area at the beginning of 2020, there have been significant impacts on City operations and services.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the City of London programs and services that we anticipate will be available to the community during the Spring and Summer of 2021, as well as to identify any additional impacts that COVID-19 will have on services and programs during that time.

Throughout this time, the City of London is guided by Provincial Orders that impact programs, services, and facilities. Changes in Provincial guidance may have an impact on City operations at any given time, including the current stay-at-home order.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, meeting on June 23, 2020, Agenda Item 2.1 - COVID-19 - City of London Services.

<https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=73221>

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, meeting on September 22, 2020, Agenda Item 2.4 – City of London Fall Services

<https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=74819>

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, meeting on December 16, 2020, Agenda Item 2.2 – COVID-19 - City of London Services Update (Winter)

<https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentID=74440>

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

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, guiding principles were defined 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 every stage of the COVID-19 response. Throughout all operations, health and safety precautions have been incorporated, including efforts that allow for health screening upon entry of City facilities, appropriate personal protective equipment, physical distancing, frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing, and frequent sanitization of high touch areas.

Precautions introduced in 2020 that have continued include the following:

- Enhanced use of plexiglass to support physical distancing where there is customer contact
- Extension of existing remote working arrangements to June 30, 2021. Civic Administration is currently considering an extension to this timeline.
- Elimination of any non-essential, in-person training for staff, with virtual training continuing
- Elimination of any non-essential, in-person meetings for the Civic Administration, with virtual meetings continuing
- Restricted movement between facilities, limited to essential duties only

As health guidance has changed, all efforts have been made to ensure that City practices and procedures are aligned with these changes, taking every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In recent months, these changes have included the requirement for a surgical mask and eye protection for employees whose roles may require them to come within 2 metres of physical distance.

Alignment with the Province:

All actions taken at the municipal level have been aligned with the safety, recovery and restarting activities of the Province of Ontario. Decisions made at the Provincial level have had a direct impact on the City's operations. Most recently, this has included adherence to the Provincial stay-at-home that was enacted on April 8, 2021.

The full Ontario framework can be found here: [Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#).

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

COVID-19 Working Group:

The COVID-19 Working Group has been in place since January 2020 to monitor the threat of this virus spreading in our community, and in our workplace. This team continues to meet two to three times per week, with an ongoing focus on supporting the organization and the community as COVID-19 impacts continue to evolve.

Operational Task Forces:

As an extension of the COVID-19 Working Group, three operational task forces were formed, focusing on People, Technology and Facilities. These task forces remain in place to ensure an effective approach to the delivery of services for Londoners across the organization, and support employees as they deliver services to the community. Each of these task forces is comprised of individuals from across the organization to help ensure that the City's approach has a strong focus on customer service, is consistent across all service areas, and that employees have the tools, policies, and processes in place to work and deliver effectively.

Culture of Safety:

In late 2020, a culture of safety task force was formed, recognizing that the City's culture also needs to reinforce the importance keeping everyone safe on the job in terms of both physical safety and mental health. The focus of this task force extends beyond COVID-19 to enhance safety overall. Initial work through this task force has begun, including identification of a work plan and team members.

3.0 Program and Service Impacts – April 1 – September 1

3.1 Current State:

On April 16, 2021, the Province announced an Ontario-wide stay-at-home order and introduced additional restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19. Impacts on City services during these times include closure of the following:

- Golf courses
- Soccer pitches
- Baseball diamonds
- Tennis courts and pickleball courts
- Basketball courts
- Skate parks
- Picnic areas, park shelters and outdoor exercise equipment

Parks, green spaces, and trails remain open for walking and biking, but residents are required to maintain physical distance and to attend these only with members of their own household, a member of one other household in which there is a single resident, or a caregiver. Playgrounds remain open, with the gathering restrictions applying. Off-leash dog parks and park benches also remain open.

During these times, By-law officers will continue to address infractions at outdoor recreation amenities where activities are prohibited, essential business operations that are not following protocols, gatherings that are above the limits, and violations of the mask and face coverings regulations in all settings. They have actively patrolled locations where there have been complaints or where infractions have been observed. By-law officers will continue to use all available options, which may include engagement, education, and enforcement.

As Ontario continues to experience the third wave of COVID-19, these extraordinary measures are in place to prevent further spread. The service overview provided anticipates current measures will be lifted as planned following the six-week stay-at-home order. If these orders are not lifted and/or additional measures are put in place, all City services and operations will adhere to all measures in place at all times.

3.2 Service Overview

Throughout the pandemic, preventing the spread of COVID-19 creates restrictions that continue to have impacts for many of the City's services and programs. As a result, modifications that have been made to ensure that all health precautions are in place and all Provincial orders are followed will continue into 2021.

It is important to note that throughout 2020, there was a great deal of uncertainty related to the impacts that COVID-19 would have on the organization and on the community. As staff planned for the summer of 2020, that uncertainty included potential impact of COVID-19 on the health of the Civic Administration and members of the public, potential restrictions on operations, and uncertainty about the full financial impacts that the City could face because of COVID-19. These factors were considered in decisions to mitigate impacts on services and service levels.

Moving forward, the approach through 2021 will be to stabilize service delivery to levels Londoners are accustomed to as best as possible within COVID-19 restrictions. Two things will inform the type and levels of service provided:

- Our ability to follow all health precautions and guidance (such as physical distancing)
- Our obligation to adhere to any and all Provincial orders related to COVID-19

As well, as the Province has moved through its Keeping Ontario Open Framework, the Civic Administration has focused on delivering as many services as possible to Londoners. This has meant modifying how and when some services are delivered; however, many services have been able to continue with these modifications.

Looking ahead to services that will be offered in the coming months, high level impacts include:

- In-person recreation programming will include 14 day camps, indoor and outdoor Recreation Guide programs, and pending health measures, and some free half-day Playground programs for children.
- Virtual and phone-based programming will continue through the summer, such as fitness classes for seniors and Seniors Centres Without Walls
- Seasonal operations that were paused last summer will resume.
- To ensure that all physical distancing requirements can be adhered to safely in yards, vehicles, and buildings, the temporary seasonal workforce will be 75% of what is typically hired during summer months; however, we will prioritize work to mitigate impacts on services.
- Service levels for the Coordinated Informed Response and the Core Area Action Plan will be maintained.
- Free emergency childcare for school aged children starting April 19, 2021 for eligible health care and other frontline workers (dependent on available spaces in licensed childcare centres and home childcare).

Current information about all services is available online at www.london.ca/covid-19 .

Appendix A - Overview of City Services Provided During the COVID-19 Pandemic - provides an overview of all services that have been delivered through this time, from vital services to services that have been permitted as Provincial orders and health guidance has evolved. Where services have been identified for the spring and summer of 2021, the delivery of services is dependent on when the Provincial Framework, or additional measures permit them.

Conclusion

It has been more than a year since COVID-19 first had an impact on City of London programs and services. Throughout this time, the City has provided vital services to the community, and the Civic Administration has responded quickly to changes to Provincial orders, restarting programs and services where it is safe and possible to do so, and modifying and restricting services when it was not.

Looking ahead, the delivery of programs will continue to be impacted by the Province's progression through its [Keeping Ontario Safe and Open Framework](#). This will also be impacted on any additional measures that may be enacted.

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 of staff.

Prepared by: Patti McKague, Director, Strategic Communications and Government Relations

Recommended by: Lynne Livingstone, City Manager

CC: Senior Leadership Team
COVID-19 Working Group

Appendix A: Overview of City Services Provided During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Service Impacts – Overview:

At all times, all of the actions taken at the municipal level have been aligned with the safety, recovery and restarting activities of the Province of Ontario. Decisions, guidance, and restrictions imposed at the Provincial level have had a direct impact on the City’s operations, and modifications may be required because of changes in Provincial directions. During the times when the Province has enacted an Ontario-wide shut down or stay-at-home order, some in-person services and access to City facilities including City Hall may not be permitted in efforts to adhere to the orders and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Services that have been available throughout the pandemic	In-Person Services Available (when permitted by the Province)	Anticipated Spring/Summer Services available (when permitted by the Province)	Services that have not resumed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerk’s Office • Marriage licences • Commissioning documents • City Clerk’s – general phone/email inquiries (661-CITY) • Council Services • Council and Standing Committee Meetings • Burial Permits • MFIPPA requests • Tax payments • Provincial Offences Administration payments and inquiries and early resolution meetings • Public Participation Meetings 	<p>City Hall (in person):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage licences • Commissioning documents • Civil Ceremonies (with limits to the number of participants, based on Provincial Orders) • Tree removal permits (by phone or online, with payments accepted online or in person) • Inquiries related to development, building permit and business licensing applications • Building permit and business licensing inquiries • Tax payments • Payment of invoices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor sporting amenities • Benches, picnic tables and park shelters • Playgrounds • Skate parks • Basketball courts • Tennis and pickleball courts • Disc golf • Indoor, outdoor pools/spray pads and wading pools • Dry pads in arenas for programmed use and ice availability at Bostwick arena • Off-leash dog parks • Community gardens • Private indoor rentals at all recreation facilities will be evaluated monthly, beginning in July • In-person recreation programming, including 14 Day Camps, Storybook Gardens, indoor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk side appointments in Social Services • Community hoteling partners (Social Services) • Ontario Works offices at Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre • Desk side appointments in Children’s Services • Special Events will not be permitted through Canada Day and will be evaluated monthly, beginning in July • Provincial Offences Administration Office: in-person or trial proceedings have not been authorized by the Ontario Court of Justice until Virtual proceedings commence (anticipated Q2 2021)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearings • Committee of Adjustment meetings • Advisory Committee meetings • Fire Services • Emergency Management and Corporate Security • Facilities Operations • Traffic Services • By-law Enforcement • Planning, Building and Development Services • Road operations • Park maintenance • Long-term care (Dearness home) • Garbage Collection, Recycling, and Envirodepots • Children’s Services Fee Subsidy • Virtual and phone-based recreation programs • Social Services (Ontario Works) • Housing Services, Housing Access Centre (HAC) • Homeless Prevention and Supports • Water and Wastewater Services • Household Special Waste Depot and Landfill (these were closed briefly in March 2020, but have remained open since) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearings conducted by the City of London’s Hearings Officers <p>206 Dundas Street (in person, by appointment):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage alteration permits • Development application consultations • Pre-application consultation meetings • Application review meetings • Engineering review meetings <p>Public Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Participation Meetings • Public hearings • Committee of Adjustment meetings • Advisory Committee meetings (since these resumed in February 2021, gathering restrictions have not allowed for in-person meetings. When permitted, these will return to in person) • Internal inspection of occupied dwellings (alterations) • Ontario works open for front counter services for cheque pick up, cheque encashment, and emergency services at designated times • Housing Access Centre, Homeless Prevention, and Coordinated Access front counter services are available for 	<p>and outdoor Recreation Guide programs, and, pending health measures, a limited number of free half-day Playground programs for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf courses • Some virtual and phone-based programming will continue through the summer, such as fitness classes for seniors and Seniors Centres Without Walls • London Animal Care Centre • New sign programs, such as area speed limits • Walkway cleaning • All-way stop sign counts, traffic signal and pedestrian accommodation counts, traffic calming studies • Sign replacements and other traffic management operations • Road maintenance (manhole and catch basin resetting) • Sidewalk, curb, and gutter repairs • Interior inspection of business and rental units • Children’s Services – Emergency Child Care for school aged children beginning April 19, 2021 dependent on available spaces in licensed childcare centres and home childcare) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer neighbourhood outdoor movie nights, neighbourhood equipment lending, neighbourhood small events fund (these will be evaluated monthly to determine whether they may be permitted)
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property tax (online and by phone) • Service London • Recreation customer service • Hearings conducted by the City of London's Hearings Officers • Internal support and corporate services such as Finance, Human Resources, Legal, Information Technology Services, and Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing and emergency shelter supports for emergencies, by appointment only • Children's Services front counter services for fee subsidy application support at designated times • Recreation programming for all ages • Catty Shack 		
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At all City facilities, health and safety precautions are in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, and to protect the public and employees. These include health assessments upon entry, limiting the number of people in the building, a requirement to wear a mask under the by-law, and efforts to ensure a minimum of 2 metres of physical distance. Hand sanitizer is also available at all locations to allow for frequent hand sanitization, and rigorous cleaning practices have been established.

The City has maintained up-to-date information about facilities, programs and services on a dedicated web site, www.london.ca/covid-19.