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**memorandum****C1****COMMUNICATION****RRR - June 23, 2020****ITEM # 2**

**DATE:** June 19, 2020

**TO:** Hon. Mayor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Fire Chief Deryn Rizzi, Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service

**RE:** **COMMUNICATION**  
**June 23, 2020 / Ready, Resilient and Resourceful Committee**  
**Item No. 2, COVID-19 UPDATE – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE**  
**RESPONSE**

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**Recommendation:**

The Fire Chief of Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service recommends:

1. THAT the following report *COVID-19 Interim Report Warning Phase and First 30 Days of the Response Phase(1)* be added as Attachment 1 to Item No. 2, COVID-19 UPDATE – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE RESPONSE, attached hereto.

**Background:**

This report will provide an overview of the activities of the Emergency Planning program during the period that COVID-19 emerged as a potential threat and of the first 30 days of the response by the Emergency Management Team.

**Attachment:**

1. COVID-19 Interim Report Warning Phase and First 30 Days of the Response Phase(1)

Respectfully submitted,



Deryn Rizzi, B.A., B.Ed., MDEM, CMM III  
Fire Chief

C: Mary Reali, Acting City Manager and Deputy City Manager, Community Services  
Sharon Walker, Manager, Emergency Planning

# COVID-19 Interim Action Report

## Warning Phase

[January 27 to March 12, 2020]

- and -

## Response Phase | *the first 30 days*

[March 13 to April 13, 2020]



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an emergency event, it is important that an analysis of the response be conducted. The long duration of a pandemic requires ongoing evaluation at key points to ensure appropriate feedback is obtained in a timely manner. As the situation evolves, new challenges will arise that need to be documented in the appropriate context. Through these evaluations; the municipality, partnering agencies and stakeholders can learn from the event and identify continuous improvements. This is the first evaluation that looks at the monitoring phase from January to March 2020 and the first 30 days of the response from March 13 to April 13, 2020.



Responses and plans will never be perfect; however, through training, exercises, and experience, lessons are learned, and corrective actions are taken to enhance our ability to manage future events.

The analysis contained within this report and associated recommendations are reflective of

continuous improvements and program development and are not indicative of any sort of failure to manage the event and/or mitigate the effect. It is necessary for a timely analysis to be conducted to ensure that Emergency Plans and Emergency Management Program elements are relevant and proactive.

This document is intended to be the first of a series of action reports that will be consolidated into a final after action report that outlines the efforts of the City of Vaughan in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic event.

The focus of this report is to provide an overview of the emergency over a specific period, preparedness and response activities, and analysis through debriefing and observations related to the response for the warning and response phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report identifies key factors that led to a successful response, lessons we learned and recommendations to enhance the City's emergency management capabilities.

## COVID-19 BACKGROUND

COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019. China reported the original cluster of patients infected in Wuhan to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. These patients presented with a severe form of pneumonia of unknown origins. The number of cases grew over a period of four days. Patients experienced symptoms that ranged from mild to severe that included fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat and runny nose. More serious complications include pneumonia and kidney failure. In some cases, patients contracted the virus without displaying symptoms or feeling unwell.

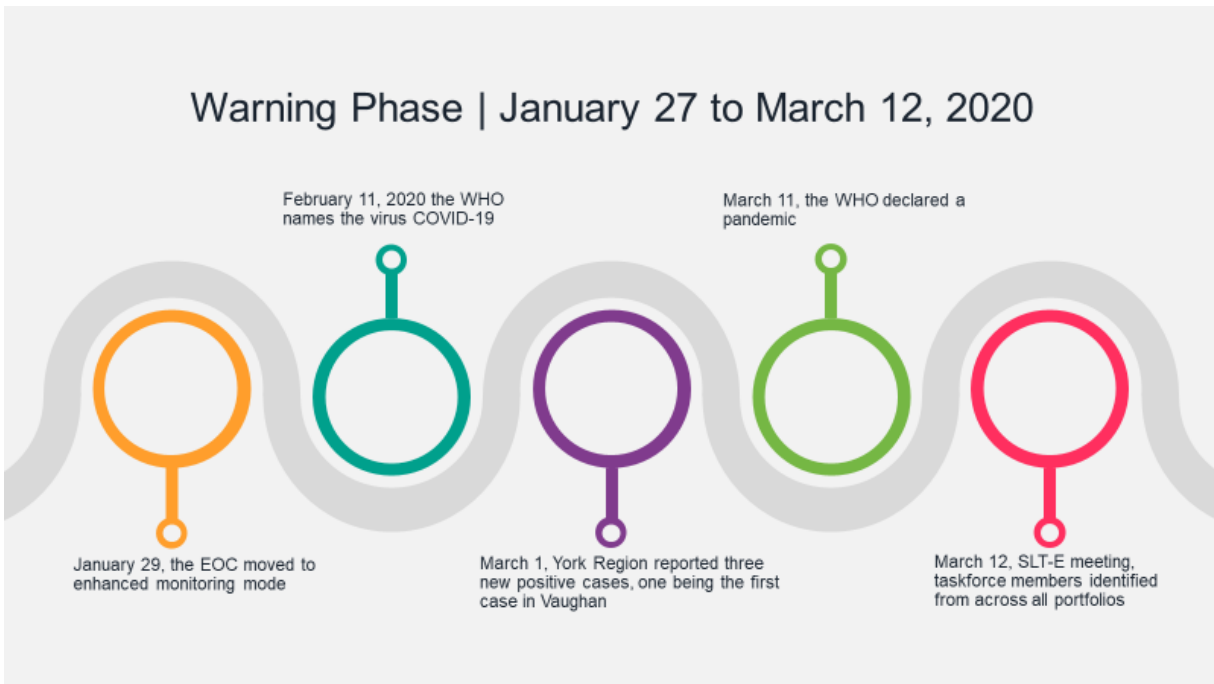
Within 10 days of the emergence of the novel coronavirus, Chinese health officials shared the genetic sequence with researchers across the globe to develop tests and to work on vaccines and treatments. Between January 21 and January 31, the virus began its spread worldwide impacting 19 countries and by March 13, there were 122 countries reporting cases.

The WHO recognized that the novel coronavirus had the potential to become an emergency on January 20, 2020 and issued a situation report the following day.

On January 22, the Canadian Federal government implemented screening requirements for airline passengers returning from China. The first COVID-19 case was identified on January 25 in Toronto from a traveller returning from Wuhan, China.

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS – WARNING PHASE | JANUARY 27 TO MARCH 12, 2020

The Emergency Planning Program functions daily in routine monitoring mode and was tracking media stories, WHO reports, and medical health literature related to the emerging situation.

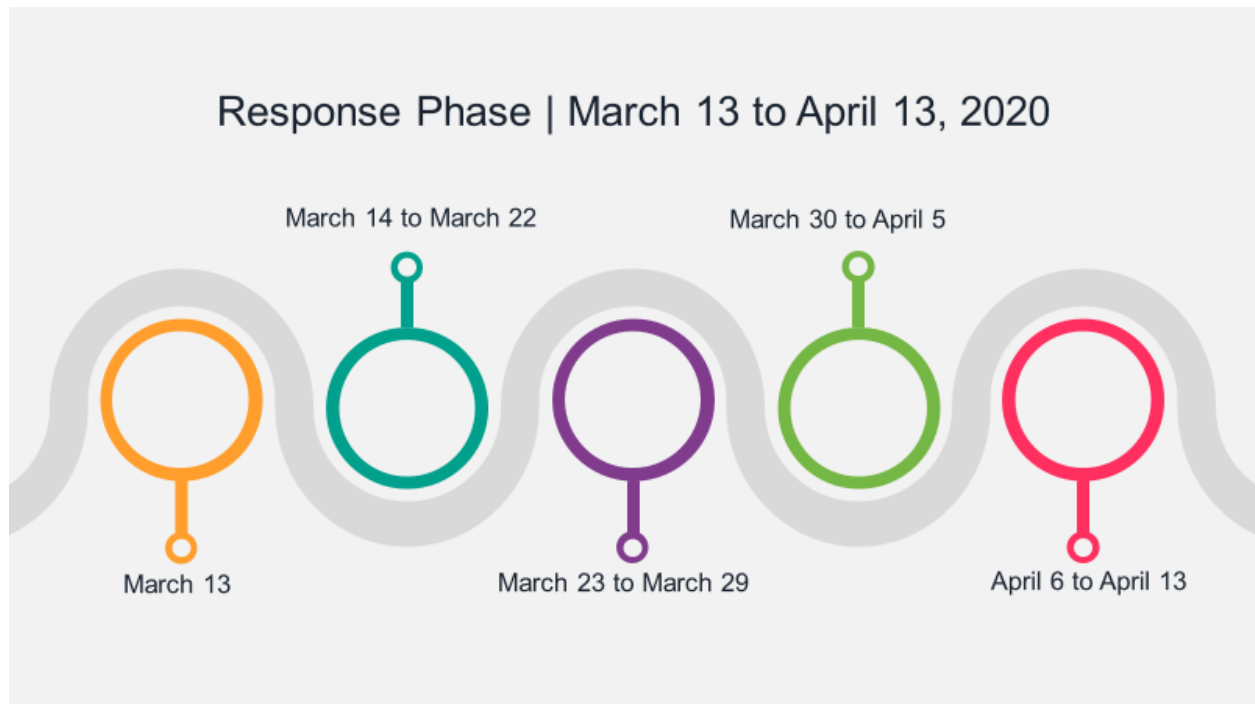


- January 23, a briefing was provided to the Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) Management Team on the novel coronavirus and situation reports were issued to Senior Leadership Team – Executive (SLT-E), Mayor and Members of Council which continued daily for two weeks. The briefings evolved to three times a week until the Emergency Plan was activated on March 13.
- January 25, the first COVID-19 case in GTA was diagnosed.
- January 29, the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) moved to enhanced monitoring mode because of the increase in the number of cases in China and other countries.
- February 11, the WHO named the novel coronavirus COVID-19.
- February/early March, a review of established business continuity planning workbooks was initiated across all departments.
- February 29, the first case of COVID-19 appeared in York Region and in Richmond Hill in a traveller arriving from Iran.
- March 1, York Region reported three new positive cases, one being the first case in Vaughan, and all were related to travel to Iran and Egypt.

- March 2 to 11, York Region reported an increased number of travel related cases to a total of eight.
- March 9, the first COVID-19 death occurred in a long-term care facility in British Columbia.
- March 11, the WHO declared a pandemic.
- March 11, the Federal government provided \$1 billion to health care systems in order to fight COVID-19 and required health care workers to self isolate.
  - York Region provided informal guidance people who recently travelled to self isolate.
  - SLT-E met to discuss the implications COVID-19 could have on the City and directed that a taskforce be convened.
  - Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) initiated increasing VPN bandwidth to accommodate alternate work arrangements.
  - Facilities Management Services (FMS) increased cleaning and disinfection of buildings and high touch surfaces.
- March 12, SLT-E met and taskforce members were identified from across all portfolios.
  - Q & A's were developed for people leaders. Staff who could work from home and staff required to remain in the offices were identified.
- March 12, physical distancing protocols were recommended, professional sports suspended their seasons, major events were cancelled, and a Provincial announcement was made that all schools in Ontario would be closed until April 6.



## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS – RESPONSE PHASE | MARCH 13 TO APRIL 13, 2020



### MARCH 13, 2020

- SLT-E and the Taskforce met to discuss provincial orders to close schools and next steps for the City.
- A risk assessment was conducted using the Public Health Agency of Canada mass gatherings tool.
- The decision was made to activate the emergency plan; the alert was sent to the Emergency Management Team (EMT) and to Mayor and Members of Council.
- Hybrid process for the EOC was established – EOC Director and Section Chiefs were deployed to the EOC effective March 16, and the Taskforce consisting of EMT officers commenced operated remotely to reduce the risk of spreading and contracting COVID-19.
- OCIO worked on enhancing technology systems but supply chain disruption created backlog in orders for cell phones, computer hardware etc.
- City announced that all community centres and Vaughan Public Libraries (VPL) would close at 1700 hours effective March 14 until April 6.

- The Joint Operations Centre was closed to the public effective March 16.
- Federal government issued a directive to avoid non-essential travel and suspended Parliament.

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## **MARCH 14 TO 22**

### ***Federal Government***

- Canada closed borders to non-Canadians and travellers were directed to self isolate for 14 days. International flights were restricted to Pearson, Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal airports. Canada and United States borders closed to non-essential traffic.
- Initiated efforts to bring Canadians abroad home.
- Travel advisory issued to avoid travel to affected countries.
- Economic aid program of \$82 billion was announced.
- Implemented screening and isolation of irregular border crossers then subsequently announced that asylum seekers would be turned back at the border.
- Promoted that businesses retool or change production to create personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators and sanitizers. Difficulty in obtaining PPE due to supply chain disruption.
- Canada withdrew from the 2020 Olympics.

### ***Ontario***

- Declared a state of emergency on March 17.
- Orders were issued prohibiting events of over 50 people, closure of childcare centres, bars, theatres, concert centres, and restaurants unless take-out and delivery could be provided.
- Hospital bed capacity increased and assessment centres were opened.
- Recommended people over the age of 70 to stay home.
- Directed that Doctor's notes were not required for COVID-19 related absences.
- The Solicitor General issued directive to Chiefs of Police to enforce the provincial orders.
- COVID-19 assessment centres were established throughout the province.

### ***York Region***

- York Regional Police opened their EOC.
- York Region hospitals opened assessment centres.
- York Region activated their EOC.
- Aurora, Newmarket, Georgina and East Gwillimbury declared emergencies.

- First outbreak of COVID-19 identified in a long term care facility in York Region at Markhaven Home for Seniors.
- First COVID-19 death in York Region occurred in Markham.

### ***Vaughan***

- The EOC was convened. Processes were implemented to record information and lessons learned. Emergency cost centre was established, and analysis of revenue impacts initiated. EOC briefing meetings occurred twice a day. Large power outage occurred lasting for 30 minutes due to malfunctioning circuit that affected Maple, Concord and Thornhill.
- Declaration of an emergency on March 17. Declaration assessments identified seven criteria were occurring, nine were not and five were partially occurring. The Provincial Emergency Operations Centre and the media were alerted. Declaration rationale document was generated.
- Council suspended the noise by-law to facilitate deliveries to food stores. Special Council meeting to enact procedural by-law for electronic meetings took place. City waived late penalty on interim tax bills, elderly homeowners tax assistance program application deadline extended. Public Hearing scheduled for April 7 was cancelled.
- City launched the Vaughan Business Action Plan. March Break camps were cancelled, and refunds issued. Animal Services and City Hall services became by appointment only. Business Continuity Plans were implemented. Issuing of special events permits were suspended. Engineering staff identified for cross training and redeployment to water if necessary. Waste collection expanded due to increase in garbage from more people being at home. Public notices issued on changes to service delivery. Signage installed in parks and public notice issued to not use equipment. Recreation Services developed tips for wellness and staying active while in isolation. VPL began development of digital services. The financial audit was postponed and a freeze on discretionary spending was implemented.
- The definition of essential staff was developed to include those required to meet legislative standards, support employee and public health, safety and security, enable critical services and support COVID-19 mitigation and recovery, support services necessary to keep essential services operating, protect and operate vital infrastructure, fulfill contractual or legal and financial obligations.
- Departments that could work from home and non-union staff who could be redeployed were identified. Met with unions to discuss impact of provincial orders. Hiring freeze implemented. The number of staff in self isolation were identified. Online courses were offered to staff working from home.

- Public reported concerns and complaints about large construction projects continuing, people congregating and businesses not abiding by the provincial orders. By-Law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (By-Law) increased presence of officers in parks to reinforce provincial orders.
- Services that could be moved online were identified. Prioritization of technology to support alternative work arrangements conducted. Alerted to an increase in phishing and cyber attacks. Departments utilized technology for meeting with external agencies.

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## **MARCH 23 TO 29**

### ***Federal Government***

- A program to support local farmers and agri-food businesses was announced.
- Support provided to mobilize researchers and life sciences companies for development of treatments and vaccines.
- Physical distancing and hygiene campaign were implemented.
- Repatriation flights for Canadians stranded abroad and a mandatory 14 day quarantine for new arrivals in Canada implemented. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 could be banned from flights.
- Appeal to public for PPE supplies issued due to a supply shortage across Canada and globally.
- Announced program to support small businesses.
- Quebec became hotspot for COVID-19 cases in Canada.
- The United States of America, Italy and Spain became the global hotspots.

### ***Ontario***

- Orders issued to close all non-essential business for 14 days. Province created toll free phone number for business to get clarification on essential and non-essential designations.
- Enacted job protection for leave of absence for childcare legislation.
- Issued Alert Ready announcement for travellers to self isolate.
- The Ontario Hospital Association given the authority to take over any institution that could be a possible alternative hospital.
- Announced aid to municipalities with no details.
- Regulation enacted to suspend timelines related to planning under the *Municipal Act*.

## **York Region**

- Declared a state of emergency on March 23, 2020.
- First case of local transmission identified.
- York Region Transit required passengers to enter through centre door of buses.
- Childcare Taskforce established and requested municipalities provide a list of essential services who may require childcare.

## **Vaughan**

- By-Law operations focused on provincial orders and physical distancing education. Park patrols instituted. Plan to redeploy staff to support monitoring of parks initiated. Closure signage posted on amenities in parks. Reports received of people using closed playing fields. Clarification on enforcement of provincial orders received that allowed Fire Inspectors and Building Inspectors to enforce the orders with By-Law Officers. Building Inspectors reported physical distancing not occurring on some construction sites.
- Littering of gloves and masks on private and public properties became an issue. PPE for staff picking litter was required. Public awareness campaign launched. Anxiety of solid waste staff and contractors due to potential exposure to infected garbage and reports surfaced of work refusals in Hamilton. Waste collection notice issued to make pick up safer for waste collection contractor.
- Health and safety protocols developed for staff in the field. Review of critical and essential services and impacts initiated by Human Resources. Self screening tool posted in City buildings. Wellness hints sent out to staff. Discussion on staff wearing masks but Medical Officer of Health stated they are not required. Best practice guidance for staff to work from home issued.
- Longo's on Weston Road had an employee who tested positive for COVID-19 and closed site for cleaning. Advised that patron at Al Palladini Community Centre was positive for COVID-19 and had attended on March 11, contact tracing conducted. Economic and Cultural Development identified 3,144 businesses deemed as non-essential – 26% of companies in Vaughan with 49,596 employees, 79% of small businesses and 54% in the tourism and tourism related sector. Economic and Cultural Development created a business recovery plan.
- Recreation Services initiated check in calls with presidents of seniors' clubs. They developed online programs for activities and fitness with good uptake from the public. VPL conducted the first online story time, loaned 3D printers to manufacture face masks and created online resources web page.

- Infrastructure Development stated that 90 projects were continuing and identified capital projects that could be implemented during closures. Finance analyzed budget impacts of COVID-19. Testing of technology for virtual Council Meetings conducted. Interoffice mail reduced to twice a week. The electronic approval process was implemented. All redirect lines routed to Access Vaughan. Planning held first virtual Preapplication Consultation meeting.
- VFRS concerned about new PPE directives from province to use lower quality masks. Search ongoing for N95 masks and the administration of Narcan and Ventolin was suspended.

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## **MARCH 30 TO APRIL 5**

### ***Federal Government***

- Imposed health checks on all passengers flying into Canada.
- Wage subsidy program for businesses whose revenue dropped by 30% due to COVID-19 announced.
- Announcement of \$2 billion investment in industry to develop tests, ventilators and PPE.
- Announcement of creation of COVID-19 Information App.
- Announcement of \$100 million in aid for access to food for vulnerable citizens.

### ***Ontario***

- Province extended emergency orders and ordered all communal or shared public and private outdoor recreation facilities closed. Issued directive that people not residing in same household must stay two metres apart.
- School closures extended to May 4.
- Regulation restricting gatherings to 5 people enacted.
- Information regarding two childcare centres willing to be essential worker childcare centres forwarded to Minister Lecce's office for actioning.
- Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management gathered PPE needs from fire services and attempted to source.
- Local Planning Appeals Tribunal meetings to restart as electronic meetings.
- Announcement of \$50 million for businesses to retool to make PPE.
- Order issued making it mandatory to provide personal information to enforcement officers.
- The list of business closures was expanded and industrial and residential construction were suspended.

- COVID-19 projections released with modelling of worse case versus actual cases and impact of public health measures.
- Province created online portal for citizens to check their test results.
- Quebec set up checkpoints at border with Ontario and turned back non-essential travellers.

### ***York Region***

- Information regarding 2 childcare centres willing to be essential worker childcare centres forwarded to the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) for actioning.
- Request made that school boards close outdoor play structures.
- Written request sent to York Region Medical Officer of Health for directives related to emergency services.
- Request made to York Region to notify the municipalities directly of institutional and cluster outbreaks.
- York Region Transit reduced service levels due to decrease in ridership effective Apr 5.
- Regional Forest was closed.
- Applications for essential worker childcare became available.

### ***Vaughan***

- Virtual Council meeting took place and emergency measures by-law enacted. The water/wastewater increase was cancelled. Request from community agencies renting space in City buildings for rent relief. Review conducted of city vehicle stock to redeploy to other departments. Messaging on facilities closures updated to until further notice. Review of strategic priorities of departments initiated to determine adjustments due to COVID-19. Data Collection and Lessons Learned teams created to conduct research, collect and analyze data and conduct debriefings related to the COVID-19 response. Roles of the different levels of government chart issued to the public.
- Review of 2020 outlook for revenues and expenses conducted. Review of staff for long duration closures and potential for lay-offs initiated. A framework for staff redeployment was developed. Decision made to lay-off 800 City Staff and 175 VPL staff. Recreation Services, Public Works and VPL made personal calls to staff being laid off. City decided to top up Employment Insurance payments to staff laid off. Staff wellness checks conducted by VPL. Prequalification of vendors for specialized cleaning of city buildings and vehicles. Updated information provided for staff working with construction sector. VFRS recruited a physician to provide advice and support.

- Rumors about police in other communities stopping people driving to work and asking if they are essential workers, York Regional Police reassured that this was not occurring in York Region, City confirmed that a letter could be provided to staff indicating essential workers if necessary.
- By-law officers dealt with complaints related to non-essential businesses being open. Instances of price gouging by some suppliers occurred but held to existing contracts. Wildlife related calls increase to Animal Services. Task group formed to establish plan to enforce orders. Access Vaughan call volume increased related to gatherings in parks and non-essential business that remained open.
- Suspension of work in firehalls by outside contractors. Increased cleaning frequency in all facilities. Building improvements implemented such as increasing humidity, upgraded filters in HVAC, RTU and AHU, increase level and frequency of internal to external air exchange and running systems 24/7. Disinfection of City Hall fourth floor and contact tracing initiated due to a positive COVID-19 case.
- Recreation Services launched virtual programs. Ice removal at arenas and deep cleaning of community centres. Recreation spring programs cancelled. Outdoor permits cancelled and city events postponed. Review of emergency shelter plans and updating for Maple Community Centre, Dufferin Clark Community Centre and North Thornhill Community Centre as potential alternative healthcare sites. Father Ermanno Bulfon Community Centre, Maple Community Centre and Dufferin Clark Community Centre were designated as firefighter isolation sites.
- Protocols for picking up litter developed for redeployed staff. New litter picking vacuum trucks ordered.
- City Hall lighting pilot project was implemented where City Hall was lit in different colours to show support to Italy, Canada and the United States. OCIO began investigating developing a portal for online applications for Building Standards. VPL collected technology equipment for loan to other departments. Alert issued to staff on phishing attacks.
- COVID-19 outbreak announced at Villa Leonardo Gambin nursing home. Potential COVID-19 exposure reported at Al Palladini Community centre and 1000 member names provided to public health for contact tracing.
- TACC Developments, Fieldgate Homes and Paradise Developments donated 10,000 surgical masks and 5,000 N95 masks to Mackenzie Health. Niagara University announced they will offer free online lectures. Two Longo's locations had COVID-19 outbreaks in staff. Local distillery changed operations to sanitizer production and 23 companies in Vaughan agreed to retool to produce PPE or hand sanitizer.



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## APRIL 6 TO 13

### ***Federal Government***

- Chief Public Health Officer encouraged people to wear masks.
- Projections released that 4400 to 44,000 Canadians could die from COVID-19.
- Reported that 1 million Canadians lost jobs.
- Announcement that possibly some restrictions will be lifted by summer.
- Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy announced to help employers keep and return workers to the payroll.
- Public Health Agency of Canada released guidance for infection prevention and control of COVID-19 for long-term care homes.
- Lt Colonel Grewal from Department of National Defense made contact to advise of Canadian Forces deployment to support response in GTA.
- Federal government placed all laid off employees on Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

### ***Ontario***

- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing worked with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to identify impacts on municipalities.
- Testing expanded to include Long Term Care facilities, Retirement Homes, aboriginal communities, congregate living facilities and health care workers and first responders.
- Deferral of \$15 million in property taxes for people and businesses in Northern Ontario outside of municipal boundaries.
- Financial support was provided to parents during school/daycare closures.
- Announcement of \$37 million to support outbreak planning, prevention, mitigation for indigenous communities.
- COVID-19 testing capacity increased.
- Extension of construction hours for essential projects to 24 hours implemented.
- Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee was established.
- Order issued to prevent childcare facilities from collecting fees during closures and spaces must be protected.
- Launch of Ontario Together Portal for manufacturers, entrepreneurs and innovators to provide essential supplies and equipment.
- Emergency orders extended to April 23.

## **York Region**

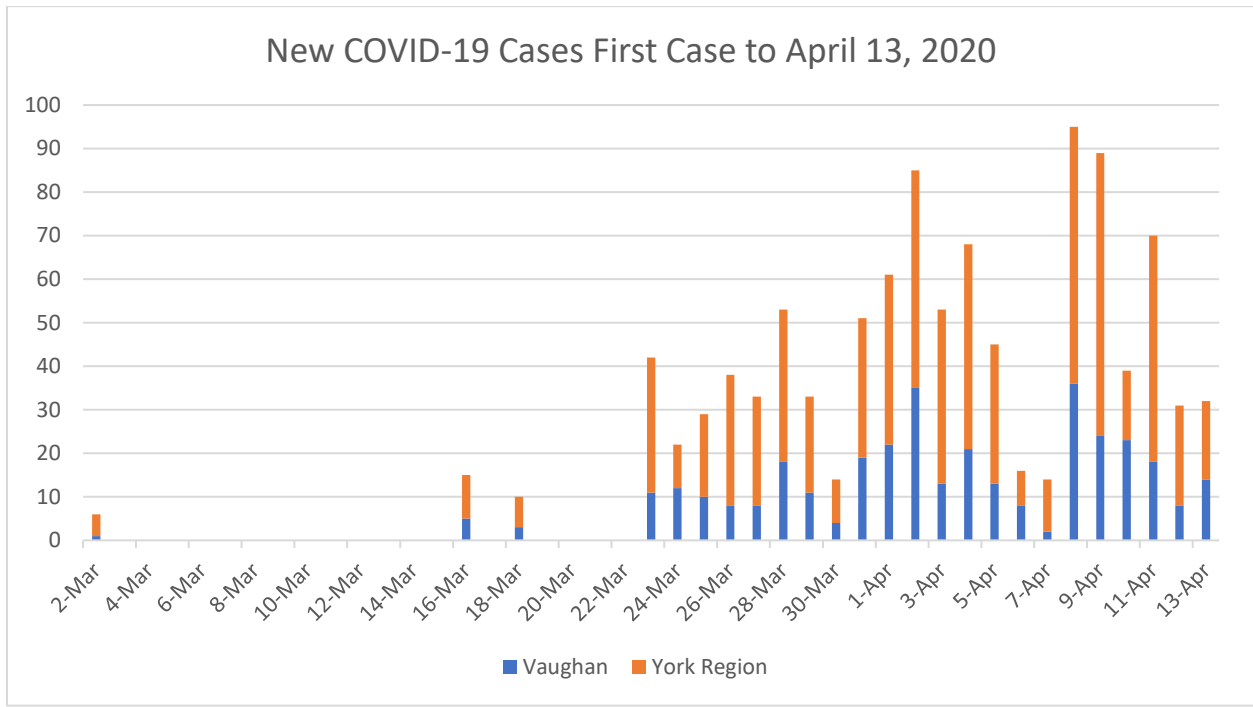
- Emergency childcare in York Region opened to essential workers.
- York Region created dashboard on website for COVID-19 Data.
- Another request was made to York Region to provide municipalities with information regarding outbreak clusters before informing the media.
- Occupational Health Physician hired to support first responders.
- Testing criteria for assessment centres broadened beyond travel and direct contact to include community spread.
- Request that York Region and municipalities do joint death surge planning.

## **Vaughan**

- Vaughan becomes a COVID-19 hotspot in York Region.
- Planning initiated for cleaning or sanitizing the community. Ride on street vacuums acquired. Yard waste collection began.
- Staff with lay-off status were changed to declared emergency leave to allow them to apply for CERB funds. Human Resources conducted risk assessments to determine staff who need PPE. Updated guidance on PPE issued to staff. EAP provider hosted weekly wellness sessions on Facebook live for staff.
- Community Wellness Task Force led by VPL and Recreation Services was created
- Alectra instituted a 60 day waiver on late charges for residential and small business clients.
- Economic and Cultural Development working with companies to implement alternative business models and accessing government aid programs, 35% of businesses now affected by closure orders. Four Points Sheraton in Vaughan was designated as a quarantine centre by Public Health Agency of Canada. Shop Vaughan campaign launched. Pasta forward Initiative – Le Jardin Banquet Hall and MPP Tibollo’s wife delivered pasta meals to emergency services and medical staff. Tops Scaffold donated 400 masks. RLX Solution donated surgical masks.
- FMS implemented measures to reduce operating costs of buildings during closure – changing temperature settings, lowering light levels, shutting down boilers. Staff advised of COVID-19 case at City Hall and cleaning activities. Anticipated delays to construction of some City projects due to new orders (VMC library and community centre). Design phase continued on capital projects.
- Public service announcements translated into Cantonese and Italian. Technology implemented to allow for citizen participation in electronic Committee of the Whole meetings and public hearings. VPL French language digital portal launched. Virtual

Canada Day announced. Flags lowered to half mast to honour those who died from COVID-19.

- VFRS had difficulty getting N95 masks through provincial supply channels



## PROVINCIAL ORDERS ISSUED

The Province issued 23 orders in the first 30 days of the pandemic. There were nine orders that did not directly impact the City as they were specific to the health and social services sectors or did not apply. The following are the orders issued:

- Order in Council 518/2020, Declaration of Emergency Under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* – 03-17-2020,
- O. Reg. 51/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Closure of Establishments – 03-18-2020,
- O. Reg. 52/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Organized Public Events, Certain Gatherings – 03-18-2020,
- O. Reg. 75/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Drinking Water Systems and Sewage Works – 03-23-2020,
- O. Reg. 80/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Electricity Price for RPP Consumers – 03-24-2020,
- O. Reg. 82/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) - Closure of Places of Non-Essential Businesses – 03-24-2020,
- O. Reg. 98/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) - Prohibition on Certain Persons Charging Unconscionable Prices for Sales of Necessary Goods – 03-27-2020,
- O. Reg. 104/20: Emergency Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Closure of Outdoor Recreational Amenities – 03-30-2020,
- O. Reg. 106/20 Order Under Subsection - Extensions and Renewals of Orders – 03-30-2020,
- O. Reg. 114/20: Order Under Subsection ON 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Enforcement of Orders – 03-31-2020,
- O. Reg. 120/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Access to COVID-19 Status Information by Specified Persons – 04-03-2020,
- O. Reg. 139/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Child Care Fees – 04-09-2020,
- O. Reg. 141/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Temporary Health or Residential Facilities – 04-09-2020, and
- O. Reg. 142/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Act - Closure of Public Lands for Recreational Camping – 04-09-2020.

## KEY ISSUES

- Acquiring necessary PPE, cleaning products and technology hardware due to the supply chain disruption and order backlog from high volume of orders and source manufacturing country (China) in lockdown.
- Frequently changing health and safety protocols.
  - PPE analysis for field staff
- Closure of Seneca College required sourcing alternative site for housing animals (Animal Services).
- Staff anxiety related to direct service delivery, interaction with the public and new normal for City operations.
- Financial tracking of COVID-19 expenditures and revenue losses.
  - Cancelling of programs
  - Closure of facilities
- Resources fully focused on COVID-19 affect other operational needs.
- Implications of force majeure applications in contracts.
- High volume of requests for remote access and work from home.
- Increased capacity for remote access to 800 concurrent users.
- Need to create new digital services to maintain City operations rapidly including 17 applications created for various departments due to COVID-19.
  - HR shared mailbox
  - Updated website homepage
  - Network folder for Recreation Services
  - HR access
  - ATS corporate-wide for COVID -19 sick days and quarantine, time tracking
  - Recreation Services e-connect banners
  - Monitoring direct access, remote desk top series, global protect, internet links, Skype links, SIP trunks PBX
  - Access Vaughan setup for WFH
  - Configure library laptops to network
  - Support to EOC
  - Remote access WSIB solution
  - Increase Skype capacity
  - Two conference phones installed in EOC
  - How to videos on secure Skype meetings, Team meetings and setting up groups
  - How to guides
  - Reroute all revert queue lines to Access Vaughan

- E-signature capability
  - Remote virtual Council meetings
- High demand on network infrastructure and it was nearing capacity.
- Provincial orders enforcement.

## EVALUATION

A pandemic event is traditionally long in duration and to capture best practices, identification of gaps and lessons learned, debriefing sessions were conducted with the assistance of the Lessons Learned team at the 30 day point of the response. The evaluation process included members of the Emergency Management Team, City staff, and Mayor and Members of Council. This evaluation process ensures that valuable feedback is obtained while information and events are top of mind. The feedback gathered is used to inform our ongoing response and recovery efforts and forms the bases of revisions to the emergency plan and procedures. The evaluation was conducted through 64 interviews with 107 participants and follow up surveys.

The evaluation questions gathered feedback on the following questions:

1. What did we do well?
2. What could we do better?
3. What recommendations do you have?
4. What did you learn from this Emergency?
5. Additional comments.

The data collected provided great information on the emergency response and on day to day operations. The analysis of the data collected will be predominantly focused to the emergency response elements with the aim of implementing change to enhance our emergency management capacity.

## WHAT DID WE DO WELL?

This question focused the respondent to celebrate our successes in managing a challenging situation. Responses have been categorized under seven themes of processes, flexibility/adaptability, communication, technology, people, risk management and service delivery to reduce the impact.

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## PROCESSES

Respondents identified that staff utilized the existing processes in emergency management to rapidly activate the Emergency Response Plan, EMT and advised the Head of Council to declare an emergency. The EMT took decisive action and rapidly made decisions on many challenging issues. The City staff and EMT were able to move seamlessly into virtual operations. The necessary financial tracking protocols were instituted quickly to monitor the costs of the response and impacts of COVID-19 on the budget. Procedures to enforce the provincial orders were established quickly.

## FLEXIBILITY/ADAPTABILITY

The EMT was able to adjust our response in a rapidly changing environment and maintain physical distancing through a hybrid operations model. The ability to operate the EOC virtually over a long duration.

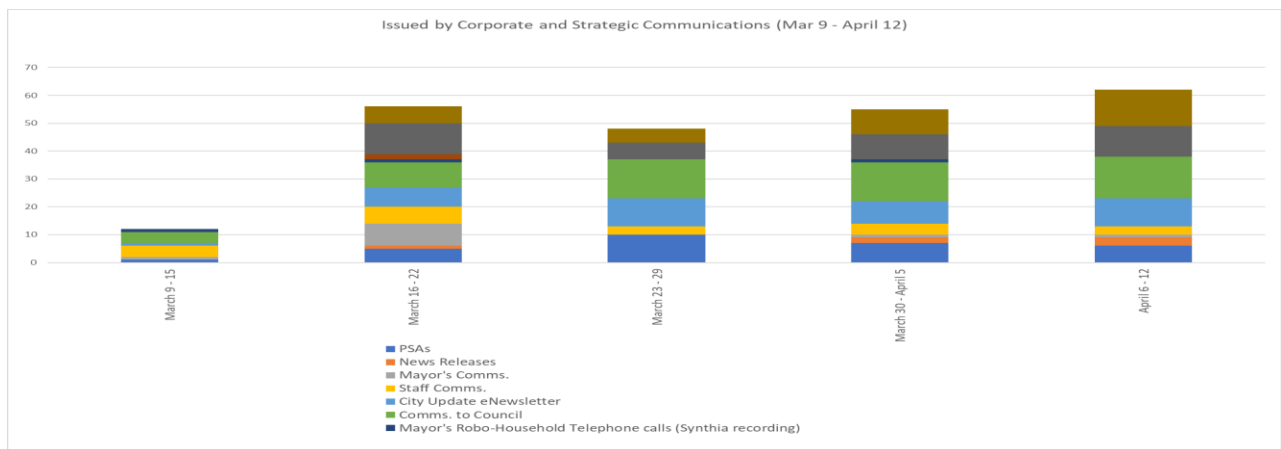
Departments demonstrated creativity in devising means to continue service delivery such as online recreation program videos, VPL online portals and the migration of manual

Introduction of Instagram TV series (Dance, Fitness, First Aid & Leadership, Playschool, Sports , Special needs, Theatre )	
Instagram Videos	41
Impressions	66,451
Reach	59,348
Engagement	4,668
Shares	863

processes to digital services. City staff were able to adapt to a new way of working by leveraging digital tools such as Teams, Skype and file sharing. VPL cancelled 500 in person programs but were able to augment with 31 new online programs with 9,000 participants.

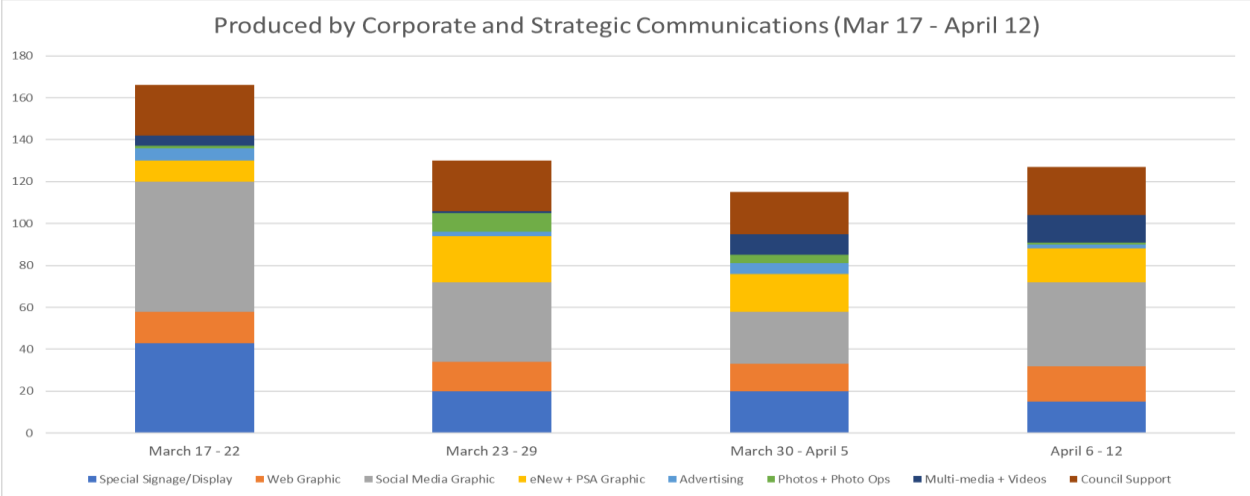
## COMMUNICATIONS

It was identified that there was a high volume of external communications to our residents, businesses and the media on the City's response to the pandemic. Access Vaughan was provided with up to date information to answer inquiries from the public. The Public Information Section issued over 230 communications in the first 30 days. The COVID-19 webpage received 10,389 visits and the news webpage received 1,168 visits.

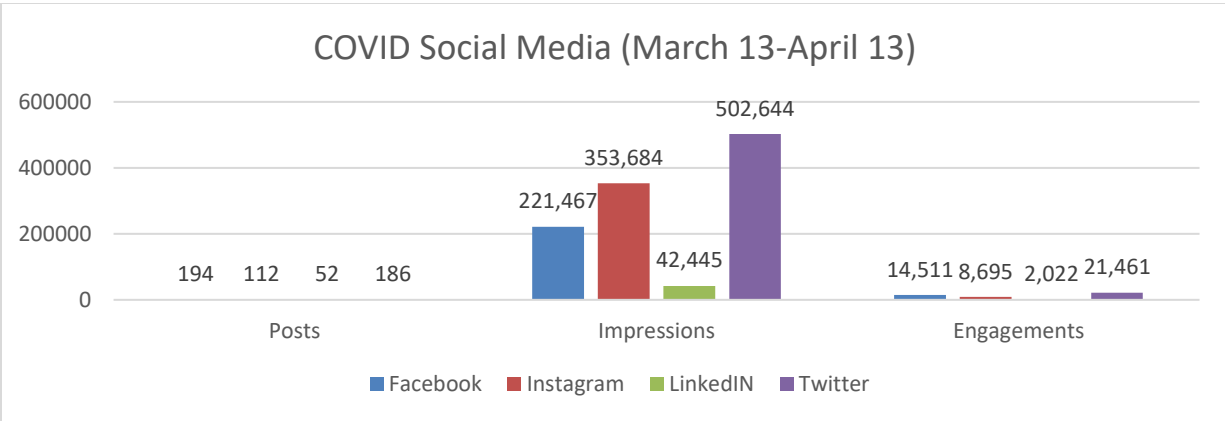


The team produced over 725 communications products in the first 30 days.





Across the Social Media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) the City issued 544 posts, which resulted in over 1 million impressions, almost 47,000 engagements and over 3,000 reactions.



The level of internal communications to staff was positive. People leaders scheduled regular townhall or group meetings with their staff which helped with engagement and morale.

## TECHNOLOGY

Having platforms in place helped with rapidly migrating staff to work from home. The ongoing efforts to upgrade software and hardware systems improved the capacity to work remotely for staff. To further support work from home, departments willingly offered hardware to other departments that was being under utilized. The creation of new online portals and e-services allowed for business operations to continue. OCIO successfully performed these activities in the first 30 days; issued over 50 notebooks, supported 75% of network users in alternate work arrangement, rerouted call centres to Access Vaughan while setting up call takers to work from

home, implemented digital signatures, set up electronic Council meetings, increased the internet bandwidth and limit for Skype dial in, configured “soft phones”, migrated email services to an alternate internet link and supported the illuminating City Hall project. OCIO during this time managed two ransomware attacks, two large scale external phishing attacks, two account hijackings and one account manipulation.

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## PEOPLE

Our people are our greatest strength in the public service. Staff were able to adapt to new processes, schedule adjustments and new operating standards. Staff demonstrated the ability to collaborate and increased productivity through the adoption of new online platforms. Our people were innovative in finding work arounds to manual processes and continue to delivery services safely. People leaders in some departments delivered distressing news to staff with empathy and compassion.

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## RISK MANAGEMENT

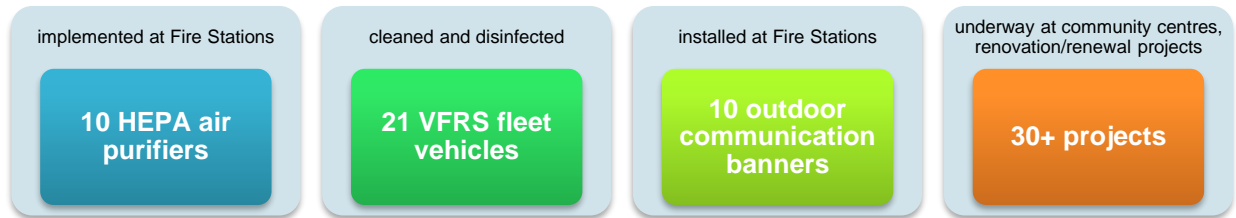
The ability to work from home and the EOC functioning in virtual mode, reduced the risk of exposure to staff and adhered to the provincial orders. Along with managing risk exposure, Human Resources rapidly implemented and revised health and safety protocols as new directives were issued. Departments identified quickly where cross training of staff was necessary to ensure coverage of critical roles and maintain critical operations. Enhanced protocols and increased cleaning were implemented in City building and vehicles.

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## SERVICE DELIVERY REDUCING IMPACT

The City took steps to implement new policy and programs and amend existing tax and revenue programs to reduce the impact on residents, businesses and community groups. A three month rent deferral program was instituted for community agencies leasing space in City buildings. Late fees on taxes were waived. Enhanced cleaning regime implemented in facilities.





Economic and Cultural Development created the Vaughan Business Action Plan to support local companies and assisted companies through the process of access funds to retool to produce personal protective equipment and sanitizer. The elderly homeowners tax assistance program application period was extended.

### WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER?

It is recognized in the emergency management field that no plan is perfect. Emergency plans are viewed as living documents and each emergency we face will require the document to evolve. The intent of this question is to identify areas for continuous improvement. The responses to this question have been categorized as processes, communication, resources, plans and procedures, policy, other levels of government, and governance.

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### PROCESSES

Respondents put forth questions over the mobilization of the EMT in a hybrid model in which the Command Group (EOC Director, Head of Council, Section Chiefs, Liaison Officers and scribes) operated separately from the Taskforce which was made up of EMT Officers. Concern was expressed over the potential for burn out of staff without position changeover occurring and if we were following the processes outlined in the Emergency Response Plan. The provincial orders forced the EMT to create a hybrid system of operations to ensure compliance with physical distancing requirements. Development of a terms of reference for the Taskforce helped clarify roles and responsibilities to some extent. Further research and analysis are necessary of other responses around the globe to seek best practices for future revisions to the emergency plan.

It was identified that we should have been looking at more warning signs early and to anticipate issues. In this case, the Emergency Planning program began monitoring the global situation being created by the Coronavirus when the World Health Organization (WHO) issued advisories in early January. Situation reports were issued to the Mayor and Members of Council and the SLT-E on January 23, when the WHO reported that the virus had spread to other Asian countries. The opinion of the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada was that we were at extremely low risk for the virus to spread efficiently which was echoed by the provincial and

Regional Medical Officers of Health. Education sessions were provided to the members of the Senior Leadership Team on COVID-19 and reviewing business continuity plans. In providing information on a pandemic, a balance must be achieved between informing and fear mongering. The legislation mandates that emergency management personnel must conduct a Hazard Risk Assessment Annually (HIRA). The HIRA identified 36 threats to the City, on which all emergency planning activities are based. Infectious disease is an identified threat.

The documentation requirements in an emergency was raised as a concern as being disclosed six weeks into the response. On activation of the emergency plan the link to the EOC Dashboard was emailed to all members of the EMT. Frequent reminders were given to members of the EMT to input information into the dashboard. Documentation requirements are a major component of all EMT training annually along with practice using the dashboard. Establishing and maintaining a log is a responsibility of every member of the EMT and is clearly documented in the Emergency Response Plan.

Respondents indicated that health and safety protocols need to be corporate wide to reduce the risk of inconsistent application across departments. Human Resources had a very challenging task to keep abreast of the frequently changing health and safety requirements issued by the Federal, Provincial and Regional health officials. Consistency in the implementation of safety protocols across the organization is important, but it must be recognized that some departments will have unique needs that are situation and operations related.

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## COMMUNICATION

It was identified that regular conference calls between the EOC and Senior Leadership Team and Task Force would have clarified the scope of the emergency and response. The question was posed by Council as to the degree of reach of information to the public and if everyone was receiving the information. There was a recommendation of utilizing technologies such as Next Door and Digital Resident Care and to evaluate the effectiveness of electronic signage. Some Councillors indicated that they wanted to be present for the EOC briefing meetings in order to obtain information quickly. A review of the communication procedures to Council will be conducted.

Information received from York Region was not up to date and other credible sources were utilized. Council identified that greater clarity was needed on the protocols for releasing information provided by York Region. Council further identified that the speed in which the other levels of government announced financial assistance to municipalities was concerning.

Many of the orders issued by the Province were ambiguous and required additional time and communications with the Province to obtain clarity.

Respondents indicated that they wished for more communication to support employee well-being and coping with isolation. Human Resources issued regular communications on these subjects.

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## RESOURCES

Concerns were raised about obtaining PPE, supplies and vehicles. The pandemic created a disruption to multiple points of the supply chain from manufacturing to transporting and distribution. Procurement issues were exacerbated by the WHO, Federal and Provincial governments seizing control of PPE. These agencies determined who would receive the scarce resources. Procurement procedures are established protocols in the EOC and need to be reinforced. Stockpiling key supplies can be contemplated for the future, but expiration dates and appropriate storage areas must be taken into consideration. Managers requested that a list of resources be compiled and easily available on how to assist staff who are under stress due to the pandemic with childcare, home schooling and adjusting to work from home.

Technology posed some challenges such as the limitations of virtual meetings. The ability to brainstorm and support facilitations requires planning or alternative technology solutions. Initially due to disruption in the supply chain, the necessary hardware for work from home was not available. It was suggested that a hardware technology review be conducted with an emphasis of phasing out desktop systems and replacing them with laptops and mobile devices to better support work from home. Peripheral equipment such as printers for staff working at home and proper ergonomic office furniture were identified as issues.

While new digital solutions were implemented rapidly, not having online payment platforms and other online tools in place did have an impact on maintaining some operations. Staff had difficulty accessing electronic files and specific programs from home.

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## PLANS AND PROCEDURES

Respondents suggested that a risk management and control approach be applied to situation assessment and decision-making in a formalized manner. A review of current assessment and decision-making practices in the EOC will be conducted and the necessary tools will be developed. It is recommended that any existing department plans be reviewed and revised to include prioritizing initiatives and to delineate between activities that are business as usual and emergency response. Clear roles and responsibilities in these plans need to be developed.

They recommended that succession planning be included in business continuity plans that identifies critical functions that require cross training and back-up resources.

Concern was expressed that all levels of government should be better prepared for a pandemic. It has been well known in the field of emergency management that pandemics are a constant threat but how the threat manifests and the jurisdictional authority varies greatly depending on the level of government. Lower tier municipalities have no jurisdictional authority over directing health care emergency response and municipalities in general have limited authority to impose restrictions. For the City, the pandemic is predominantly a continuity of operations response and supporting provincial orders. The capacity of the City to manage the pandemic was above that of most municipalities in that business continuity plans were in place even though some were out of date, many were still relevant. The lessons learned and recommendations from the COVID-19 response will be captured as a pandemic protocol in the Emergency Response Plan Appendixes.

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## POLICIES

Comments were made that a standardized work from home policy with requirements and expectations was needed. The City had a draft alternate work arrangement policy and it needs to be recognized that events do not align with our implementation schedule. The situation changed rapidly in the early stages of the pandemic and having a draft process provided the foundation to implement a new method of service delivery with little notice.

Councillors indicated that enactment of key by-laws and policies related to the emergency should have been faster. The speed of which new orders were made by the Province was rapid and frequently required clarification before by-laws could be brought to Council to be enacted. Councillors stated that they should have a greater role in decision-making during emergencies.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Each emergency that the City manages will present new challenges and innovations that will lead to continuous improvements to our response capabilities and potentially to our daily operations. A common response was that City personnel learned how agile and adaptable we are to changing how we deliver programs and services which included; changing hours of work, leveraging staff from other departments with expertise and credential and that our workforce is resilient, talented and can work together to create new solutions.

Respondents appreciated that we were able to better leverage technology. Through the use of technology, virtual meetings are more effective than most staff expected. The functionality of sharing screens saved time. Staff indicated that alternate work arrangements proved to be a positive experience. Some staff did identify that it was necessary to have boundaries to ensure a work/life balance. Additionally, some staff felt that they always had to be available even after business hours when working from home.

The creation of the Data Collection and Lessons Learned teams proved to be invaluable. The statistical data collected has aided in decision-making and creation of reports. The research conducted by the Librarians has not only assisted the City but has been shared with emergency managers from across the Province. The Lessons Learned team allowed for debriefings to be conducted at strategic points in the response in an objective and neutral fashions. Both teams have been able to centrally consolidate key information that can be better leveraged by the whole organization.

The caring and compassion of the leadership of the City was appreciated by staff who were placed in difficult circumstances. The professionalism of our people leaders made for an efficient and effective response. The duration of the response made staffing shortages more pronounced in some departments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations received can be divided into two classifications; those that are within the scope of the Emergency Planning Program to implement and those that are outside of the program's jurisdiction. The recommendations to follow are those that are within the responsibility of the Emergency Planning Program and fall within the categories of business continuity planning, emergency plan and procedures, training and exercises, resources, and policy. The recommendations outside of the scope of the program will be provided separately to the SLT-E for consideration.

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### BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

- *Conduct annual reviews of Business Continuity Plans (BCP) that align with business planning process.*
- *Create a central electronic storage file for all department BCP's.*
- *All departments understand interdependencies through shared BCP portal.*
- *Coordinate with Office of Transformation and Strategy to review BCP tool and process.*
- *Through the BCP process identify essential services and employees and develop a succession plan in the BCP.*

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### EMERGENCY PLAN AND PROCEDURES

- *Revise the Emergency Response Plan to include feedback from the debriefing sessions.*
- *Include Data Collection team in Strategy Section of the EMT.*
- *Include Lessons Learned team in the Emergency Response Plan for debriefing purposes.*
- *Develop a pandemic management appendix to the Emergency Response Plan.*
- *Revise virtual EOC procedures.*
- *Develop a recovery plan appendix to the Emergency Response Plan.*
- *Provide support to departments on developing specific incident response protocols.*
- *Develop an emergency preparedness and resiliency strategy.*
- *Establish procedure for EMT to sign-off review of the Emergency Response Plan annually.*
- *Revise the situation report form and procedure.*
- *Create a decision record template.*

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### TRAINING AND EXERCISES

- *Conduct business continuity planning process training.*
- *Develop training modules on the emergency plans, the responsibilities of each department and the roles of each level of government in an emergency for staff.*



- *Conduct annual training on the EOC Dashboard and documentation for EMT members.*
- *Provide Council training on the Emergency Response Plan and procedures.*
- *Include issues faced in the pandemic in future exercises.*

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## RESOURCES

- *Coordinate with Human Resources to revise the staff skills inventory to include credentials.*
- *Coordinate with Human Resources to include staff skills inventory in Halogen.*
- *Consult with Logistics Section Chief, Finance Officers, Administration Section Chiefs on recommendation to establish an “emergencies fund” for disaster events.*
- *Coordinate with all EMT Sections to create a central inventory of all resources (equipment, vehicles, supplies etc.) in the City.*

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## POLICY

- *In consultation with Legal Services develop a standing emergency measures by-law with delegated authority.*

A general recommendation was made to compare our response to that of other municipalities. Every effort will be made to obtain the after action reports from those municipalities who publicize their documents. Because of the duration of a pandemic emergency, it will conceivably be months to years before after action reports are publicly available.

## CONCLUSION

The interim action report on the COVID-19 pandemic response is for the purposes of capturing insights for the first 30 days while they are fresh in the minds of the EMT. The findings of this report will be integrated with future interim action reports that will be created at milestone points throughout the duration of the pandemic. The City showed itself as a leader by taking rapid and decisive action to respond to the situation. Staff were able to adapt to a new way of delivering services and showed great creativity and innovation. The lessons learned and recommendations will be included in revisions to emergency management plans, procedures and program activities.