

Ready, Resilient and Resourceful Committee Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 23, 2020

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: COVID-19 UPDATE – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE RESPONSE

FROM: Mary Reali, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide our Hon. Mayor and Members of Council with an update on the Emergency Operations Centre response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Report Highlights

- The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated on March 16, 2020 with select members of the Emergency Management Team (EMT) in attendance.
- On March 17, 2020 Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua declared a State of Emergency in the City of Vaughan.
- Throughout the emergency, the Emergency Planning program continues to monitor the situation globally, nationally, provincially, regionally and locally.
- The Emergency Planning program continues to support the EOC operations response and reintegration/recovery efforts.

Recommendations

1. That this Report be received.

Background

The Emergency Planning program, during non-emergency situations, functions in routine monitoring mode. The program monitors local and global reports of situations which have a potential to impact the City and advises Fire Command and senior

leadership of the risks. In early January, reports were issued of a new virus in China that was spreading rapidly. The novel coronavirus created pneumonia-like symptoms and had a 2% mortality rate for those infected who had underlying health conditions such as compromised immune systems, heart disease, diabetes and chronic respiratory conditions. The mortality rate is now at 5.8%. On January 23, 2020, a briefing of the global situation was conducted with the Fire Command team and situation reports were issued to the Senior Leadership Team – Executive (SLT-E) and the Mayor and Members of Council.

The first COVID-19 cases appeared in Canada on January 22 and in the Greater Toronto Areas on January 25. The number of cases continued to grow in China and around the world; and the Emergency Planning program escalated to enhanced monitoring mode on January 29. The World Health Organization (WHO) names the new Novel Coronavirus 19 (COVID-19) on February 11, 2020. In consultation with SLT-E a review of all department Business Continuity Plans was initiated. Information sessions were conducted with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to build awareness on COVID-19 and the steps in reviewing the established Business Continuity Planning workbooks.

On February 29, the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in the municipality of Richmond Hill in York Region. On March 1, the first case was diagnosed in Vaughan. York Region Emergency Management initiated weekly meetings with municipal emergency management personnel to discuss the situation and receive guidance from the York Region Medical Officer of Health.

Throughout the week of March 9, several meetings were held with SLT-E to discuss the evolving situation and potential impacts of a pandemic on the City. The WHO declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The Emergency Planning and Emergency Management Team recommended forming a *COVID-19* Task Force to focus specifically on operational issues. In coordination with the Section Chiefs of the EMT and the *COVID-19* Task Force, a situational assessment was conducted using the Public Health Agency of Canada Mass Gatherings tool. Based on the outcome of the assessment, on March 13 recommendations were made to activate the City's Emergency Response Plan, partially activate the EMT and the Emergency Operations Centre. Subsequent to the directive of the Province to close schools, the EMT issued the directive to close all community centres and libraries effective 5:00 p.m. on March 14.

The Emergency Operations Centre was opened on March 16 with select members of the EMT in attendance. The Manager of Emergency Planning and Community Emergency Management Coordinators maintained regular communications with York Region Emergency Operations Centre and the Provincial Operations Centre. The primary responsibilities of the Manager of Emergency Planning in the EOC are to liaise with external stakeholders, ensure the EOC has the necessary equipment, monitor and report on the situation, provide situation reports and advise on emergency management and business continuity matters. On March 17, EMT members were alerted to the declaration of emergency from the Province. The EMT conducted an analysis of the

situation and future implications using the Declaration of Emergency Guidelines. The analysis identified that seven emergency declaration criteria were fully occurring, five were partially occurring and nine did not apply. On the declaration of emergency by the Mayor, formal paperwork was submitted to the Province.

A reintegration team; a sub-committee of the City's *COVID-19* Task Force, was created to develop an extensive plan to help navigate the return to the workplace "new" normal which recommends a gradual, phased approach to reopening – including:

- The introduction and enhancement of associated policies, strategies and measures that will contribute to a safe, healthy and welcoming environment that are vital to a successful return of staff to the workplace and for those staff that have continued to work at City Hall, Joint Operations Centre and works yards;
- Applying the workplace readiness essentials of preparing the building, preparing the workforce, control access, creating a physical distancing plan, reducing touch points and increasing cleaning, and communication;
- Working with Corporate & Strategic Communications (C&SC), a comprehensive communication plan will support the various phases of the Business Reintegration Plan to promote the return-to-work components, strategic measures and implementation timelines.

Phase One of the Business Reintegration Plan outlines seven key areas of consideration – Administrative; Cleaning and Disinfecting; Personal Protective Equipment; Workplace Layout and Physical Distancing; Case Response/Management; Visitors, Contractors and Suppliers; and, Inbound Parcels/Packages Guidance.

Throughout the emergency, the Emergency Planning program, the Emergency Management Team, the COVID-19 Task Force and Sub-Committee Task Force continues to monitor the situation globally, nationally, provincially, regionally and locally. Information gathered from regular meetings with York Region, other municipalities and the Province is shared amongst the EMT. The Emergency Planning program provides advice and input on decision-making, development of recovery and business continuity plans and emergency management matters. The Emergency Planning program and the EMT provided input into the Business Reintegration Plan and requested the formation of the data collection and lessons learned teams.

As we pass the three-month mark of our City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mayor and Members of Council, our Senior Leadership team, City staff, community partners, the business community and the citizens of Vaughan should be acknowledged for their tireless efforts under these unprecedented and demanding circumstances and for embracing the guiding principles: locally executed, provincially determined, and federally supported for emergency response and recovery. This has been an incredible partnership and journey in our unified response to mitigate the disease and the level of commitment and dedication to tackle the unknown has never been greater.

Unfortunately, the nature of emergency management is such that we must also be ready for the next disaster whether it is severe storms, heat waves and tornadoes – all while continuing to manage the COVID-19 response. The Emergency Planning program has been proactive in revising cooling centre procedures, updated emergency shelter plans to reflect physical distancing requirements and updated the severe storms plan to adapt our response to reflect the implications of COVID-19.

The Emergency Planning program continues to support the EOC operations and reintegration/recovery efforts. The Emergency Planning program is continuing with non-emergency operations such as development application review, consultation with other departments on emergency management matters, supporting business continuity planning reviews, reviewing risk safety management plans for propane installations, reviewing Environmental Emergency Plans (E2), coordinating with the EOC dashboard development team on the system upgrade and conducting activities to meet legislated requirements.

The pandemic emergency is a challenge as its nature is unlike any other emergency the City has managed. Most emergencies have a site, are visible and tend to have a short duration of response. A pandemic is invisible, there is no site and is of long or unknown duration. The scale of the event has impacts beyond the City.

The jurisdictional authority for response lies with federal, provincial and regional health authorities and the City is predominantly focused on continuing service delivery. Response protocols are dictated by health authorities and the provincial government, where with most emergencies the City will experience, response protocols are determined by the EMT. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response, there has been inconsistencies between the federal, provincial and regional governments and health authorities on information provided and the severity of the impacts. Responses to requests for information to other levels of government are slow to be received and on occasion refused which further compounds our ability to make decisions in a timely manner.

This is the first emergency declared by the Province of Ontario since the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* was enacted in 2006 and the first time that mandatory orders have been issued. The ambiguity of some of the orders created challenges for the EMT in understanding the repercussions and our responsibilities in enforcement.

The EMT operated in a hybrid manner to the systems documented in the Emergency Response Plan. While the hybrid operating system was important in protecting the health and safety of the EMT, there was confusion amongst the EMT and staff regarding the structure.

The City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was rapid and decisive. The EMT recognized the depth and breadth of the impact that the pandemic would have on the community and our operations. The EMT demonstrated flexibility and adaptability to

manage an ever-changing situation with the multitude of new provincial orders issued almost daily. Having existing business impact analysis and continuity plans for most services provided the EMT the necessary information for identifying criticality of services.

The hybrid system of EOC operations provided the necessary protections for the EMT to reduce the risk of infection. The hybrid system allowed the EOC Director and Section Chiefs to focus on policy while the Officers who made up the *COVID-19* Task Force focused on operational issues.

The *COVID-19* Data and Analytics team was set up early in the response with the main focus of building a dashboard housing all *COVID-19* related data. This dashboard tracks data not only in Vaughan, but also on a provincial and federal level. This dashboard also includes operational level data from the City's departments with respect to their response efforts. For example, data related to VFRS response, corporate communication efforts, and Access Vaughan call data, to name a few. In April, the team's research focused on treatments, testing, companies retooling efforts, and provincial restrictions. In mid-April the research focused on triggers related to the reopening of cities and countries. During the month of May, the team began researching vaccine testing and socioeconomic impacts. Most recently, the team is researching Ontario announcements and local municipality openings.

The dashboard is automated to update daily by pulling data from the York Region website and provincial and federal sources. From this dashboard, the team provides reports to Senior Leaders in the organization that provides insightful information to assist in decision making during these unprecedented times. Currently the team is pulling a daily report that displays the percentage of total cases in Vaughan over a 14-day and 21-day period that is provided to Senior leaders in order to examine if the City is at or below 1% for a sustained time period. The team also provides a 5-day rolling average that mimics the provinces litmus test. This smooths the spikes and provides another picture of the curve in Vaughan.

The team has also conducted geo analytics by mapping out positive *COVID-19* emergency calls by community in Vaughan and mapping out institution outbreaks and locale businesses with known outbreaks such as that at local grocery stores. Most recently the team layered in a chronology of significant events and holidays to the *COVID-19* graphs to determine if there are any correlations to government/city announcements on the spread of *COVID-19*. The team highlighted a spike in cases post Mother's Day. The data analytics includes a population (100k) comparison which has shown Vaughan having the most active cases per 100,000 population within York Region. The operational level data has informed us that City building continues during this time. Building inspections are higher than this time last year as are permits issued by Development Engineering. The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre data shows how the population keeps growing at a fast pace, over the targets in some cases. The data also indicates that departments have pivoted in their approach to their service offerings and embraced technology.

The creation of the Data Collection and Lessons Learned teams has proved to be invaluable. The Data Collection team is comprised of specialists from several different departments and Vaughan Public Libraries who gather statistics related to operations, the pandemic and conduct research on best practices and issues from around the globe. The information gathered has been instrumental in assisting with decision-making and development of recovery plans and procedures as well as helps facilitate discussions, validate planning, and identify and address gaps.

The Lessons Learned team is responsible for conducting debriefings at strategic points in the response to ensure that feedback is collected in a timely fashion throughout the duration of the emergency declaration. The team provides the ability to collect feedback in a neutral and objective manner. The feedback collected by the team will guide revisions to the Emergency Plan and procedures, aid in developing future training and exercises and form the basis of the Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency Strategy. Both team structures will be included in future revisions of the Emergency Response Plan.

On behalf of the entire Emergency Management Team, you have our commitment that we will continue to do what we do best: coordinate, problem-solve, and act.

Previous Reports/Authority

[*A Framework for Reopening our Province*](#)

[*A Framework for Reopening our Province – Stage 2*](#)

[*City of Vaughan Media Releases*](#)

[*York Region COVID-19*](#)

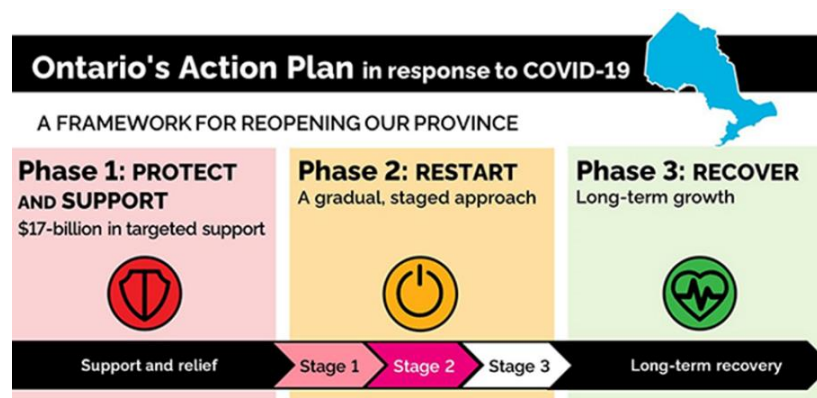
[*Public Health Ontario COVID-19*](#)

[*Government of Canada COVID-19*](#)

[*World Health Organization COVID-19*](#)

Analysis and Options

The Province's action plan in response to COVID-19 – *A Framework for Reopening Our Province* is shown below.



As of the date of this Report, the City of Vaughan is at *Stage 1 of Phase 2: Restart* in the Province's action plan. *Stage 2 of Phase 2* is a critical next step in the path to long-term economic recovery. To effectively reopen communities in Vaughan and restart the economy on the path to *Phase 3: Recover*, collaboration is essential. The Ready, Resilient and Resourceful Committee will help inform the approach to Vaughan's economic recovery. Our common focus will be on creating opportunity across the City, while working to restore long-term prosperity for the benefit of every individual who works, lives, plays and learns in our City.

The Emergency Management Team will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic at the federal, provincial, regional and local level and are ready, resilient and resourceful as we navigate through this crisis.

Financial Impact

Refer to the *Ready, Resilient and Resourceful Committee* Report of June 23 by Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer for the City's financial update to COVID-19.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Every region in Ontario has experienced the COVID-19 outbreak differently. By grouping regions of the province by local public health units (PHUs), the government's approach reflects the unique realities of different communities in Ontario, recognizing that many areas of the Province have seen fewer or no new cases of COVID-19 in the past two weeks. Directed by the Province, each region will be permitted to enter Stage 2 of [A Framework for Reopening our Province](#) when safe to do so.

Conclusion

Ontario's reopening strategy, developed with the advice of public health officials, is our path to carefully and gradually lift the restrictions imposed on our economy, and our lives, as we start looking with hope and cautious confidence towards the future while keeping in mind our local circumstances with COVID-19 rates; encouraging people and businesses to continue to follow public health guidelines. Together, we will move through the stages of the reopening strategy with the same determination and commitment to personal and collective responsibility that our City has shown over the past three months.

For more information, please contact: Deryn Rizzi, Fire Chief – Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service or Sharon Walker, Manager – Emergency Planning

Attachments

N/A

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