

COVID-19 Update

Date	June 10, 2020
To	Executive Committee
From	City Manager's Office
Service Area	City Manager's Office
Item No.	EX20-20

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Approve the following:

COVID-19 Pandemic Bylaw:

Adopt the timelines and requirements set out in the bylaws identified the COVID-19 Pandemic Bylaw section of this report in the *COVID-19 Pandemic Bylaw, 2020*.

Transit Services:

1. That transit service be adjusted so that fare collection is re-instated on June 29, 2020.
2. Delegate authority to the City Manager to negotiate and approve an amendment to the University of Regina Student Union U-Pass Agreement to suspend the program for the fall 2020 semester, or until a future date when the University of Regina provides courses primarily on-campus.

Supporting Community Recovery:

1. Delegate authority to the City Manager to waive fees set out in *The Regina Traffic Bylaw* for street use permits for mobile food vending and outdoor restaurant seating.
2. Direct the City Solicitor to prepare the necessary bylaw to incorporate the amendments as outlined in this report for the June 24, City Council meeting.

3. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on June 24, 2020.

ISSUE

The City is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the dynamic nature of *Re-Open Saskatchewan*. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for bylaw amendments and service adjustments where authority has not been delegated to the City Manager.

This report provides Council with a financial update, as well as descriptions of planned fee re-instatements and the re-opening of impacted City programs and services. Key highlights include:

- a. Re-instating fees and enforcement for metered parking effective June 15, 2020
- b. Re-opening Transit Information Centre on June 15, 2020
- c. Re-opening City Hall to the public with limited services on June 15, 2020
- d. Re-opening Riverside Cemetery Chapel to the public on June 15, 2020
- e. Re-instating fees and enforcement for non-metered parking effective June 29, 2020
- f. Re-instating transit fares effective June 29, 2020

Re-Open Saskatchewan recommends employees continue to, where feasible, work remotely through all phases. The City is positioned to continue to follow this guidance due to decisions that were made to become an early adopter of Office 365 technology and migrating to tablets and laptops. Staff have remote access to information systems that have robust cyber security measures in place. Currently, approximately 700 of 770 administrative and professional staff (27.5 per cent of City workforce) are effectively performing work functions at home. Over the coming weeks, the City is planning to slowly return these teams to the physical workplace. This is being accomplished through a phased approach that respects Government of Saskatchewan requirements, including physical distancing. With these requirements in place, we expect that up to 50 per cent of our administration and professional staff will continue to work remotely until the public health emergency has ended.

IMPACTS

This recommendation has no financial, environmental or other implications.

OTHER OPTIONS

There are no other options.

COMMUNICATIONS

One of the City's top priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic has been to provide citizens with timely information on service and program adjustments, as well as encouraging our community to follow public health orders.

This information has been shared on Regina.ca/coronavirus and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The City has also issued public service announcements and provided opportunities for regular media briefings.

Communications strategies have been developed for specific service changes as part of the re-open plan. This includes ensuring safety protocols are in place, including availability of hand sanitizer, safety shields, signage and physical distancing decals in appropriate locations.

DISCUSSION

COVID-19 PANDEMIC BYLAW UPDATE

On April 29, 2020 City Council passed *CM20-11 The Covid-19 Pandemic Bylaw, 2020*, which extended certain timelines and gave authority to officials to amend processes in response to the pandemic. Administration is recommending the Bylaw be amended to extend dates from June 30, 2020 to July 31, 2020.

The Taxi Bylaw, 1994 (Bylaw 9635)

Taxi licenses, renewals and annual inspections are normally done in April and May. In order to avoid in-person contact, existing licenses that are eligible for renewal and that would normally expire over the next two months are being extended until August 31, 2020. Further modifications to the Bylaw include the ability of taxi drivers to refuse a trip to a customer exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. Drivers can also modify other customer service standards to limit in-person contact except the requirement to provide services to non-ambulatory customers relating to storing and securing mobility devices. Requirements to drive a minimum number of hours or within a number of weeks is suspended between March 18, 2020 and July 31, 2020. The license inspector is also provided additional delegated authority to modify procedures and processes to reduce in-person contact until as long as is reasonably necessary to respond to the public health emergency.

The Clean Property Bylaw (Bylaw 9881)

The right to appeal a permit or agreement under this Bylaw is suspended from March 18, 2020 until July 31, 2020. The reason for this is that the City is not in a position right now to hear these appeals.

The Regina Animal Bylaw, 2009 (Bylaw 2009-44)

The right to appeal certain animal orders and convictions is suspended until July 31, 2020. There are also bylaw modifications to allow the City Manager or designate to waive or

modify detention fees outlined in the Bylaw where necessary because of COVID-19. In addition, this Bylaw -3- Page 3 of 3 CM20-11 provides authority to the City Manager or designate to close, reopen or modify the use of all off leash dog parks as long as is reasonably necessary to respond to the public health emergency.

The Code of Ethics Bylaw, 2017

Bylaw modifications are proposed that would allow the timelines for the Integrity Commissioner to investigate and report on complaints to be waived until July 31, 2020 as well as the timelines for Council to consider and respond to an investigation report.

COVID-19 2020 FINANCIAL UPDATE

Forecast Update

On April 15, 2020, Administration provided Council a report (CM20-8) identifying the projected 2020 financial impact of COVID-19 on the City based on three scenarios. Council with some adjustments approved Administration's planned response to the projected financial impacts under each of those scenarios. The scenarios were based on different assumptions as to when there would be a return to near normal conditions, that is, April 30, June 30 and September 30. As noted in the report, financial projections reflect a point in time estimate and can change as new information and additional actions are taken to respond to the public health emergency.

Subsequent to the report's release, the Province of Saskatchewan announced the *Re-Open Saskatchewan* plan describing a five-phased approach to re-open businesses and services throughout the province. Further, it has become evident that a return to "normal" will likely not occur until a vaccine or effective form of drug therapy is found to combat the disease, resulting in the financial impacts of COVID-19 likely extending beyond 2020 and possibly into 2022. As an example, even if full transit service is in place by the end of 2020 with no capacity restrictions, ridership will likely not return to pre-COVID-19 levels until all passengers who previously used transit believes it safe to do so. Administration has recently updated its forecast and taken the above factors into consideration. The financial impact of COVID-19 in the updated forecast is consistent with the projections shared previously related to the June 30 and September 30 scenarios which projected a negative financial impact on tax supported services in the range of \$9.6 million and \$15.2 million respectively, and between \$12.1 million and \$20.7 million overall when non-tax supported serves are included in the estimated 2020 financial impact. As a result, Council's previously approved actions and Administration's planned response are forecast to be sufficient to address the negative financial impact of COVID-19 in 2020. No further action is required to address the 2020 financial impacts at this time.

Unknown at this time is the extent of any financial impacts COVID-19 may have on the receipt of 2020 property taxes which are due on September 30, 2020. As well, the forecast does not take into consideration Council's motion that Administration return to Council with a report in July 2020 providing analysis and recommendations related to the Regina Chamber of Commerce's submission to Council requesting non-residential property owners

be provided further tax relief through a 25 per cent reduction in the municipal portion of 2020 property taxes with the reduction in taxes to be repaid over the following four years. The above projected impacts also exclude the financial impacts of COVID-19 on Mosaic Stadium operations and the Regina Exhibition Association Limited (REAL).

Administration will continue to monitor the financial impacts of COVID-19 on City finances and update Council on a regular basis.

Stadium Reserve

The pandemic has resulted in emergency measures that have included the cancellation of large public gatherings, such as the events held at Mosaic Stadium. While it is not possible at this time to reliably estimate the length and severity of these developments and the impact on the future financial results of the stadium, it is likely that the pandemic, at a minimum, will negatively affect the operating results of Mosaic Stadium in 2020 and 2021. Some of these impacts could include, but are not limited to, a substantial reduction in the facility fee revenue collected on tickets sold to Saskatchewan Roughriders Football Club (SRFC) games.

As an example, should the Canadian Football League (CFL) only play an eight-game season in 2020, only four SRFC home games would be played at Mosaic Stadium versus the ten home games that would normally occur in a season. This would result in a significant reduction in revenue. In addition, if games are played without fans in attendance, no facility fees will be collected. If fans are allowed, the public's level of comfort in attending events with large crowds is also an unknown.

The estimated financial impact of COVID-19 in 2020 alone is estimated to be in the range of \$4-5 million. It is anticipated this will affect the City's ability to achieve a net zero to positive balance in the Regina Revitalization Initiative (RRI) Stadium Reserve under the current 30-year funding model. Administration is actively working with the stadium's operator, REAL and the SRFC to identify opportunities to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Mosaic Stadium.

REAL

The pandemic is greatly impacting the cash flow of REAL. As a business that depends solely on sports, recreation, entertainment, and large public gatherings, the immediate impact of COVID-19 on the financial performance of REAL is material and presents risks to the City of Regina as the owner of REAL.

REAL is actively managing their cash flow situation. Significant actions have been taken to date, including deferring utility and other payments, as well as the temporary layoff of non-permanent and permanent staff. In April, City Council approved an amendment to REAL's credit facilities within their existing \$13 million loan guarantee (CM20-8). The approval increased the operating line of credit to stabilize REAL's cash flow to the end of the year and allow it to meet its payment obligations. As the pandemic continues, REAL is assessing risks and opportunities to mitigate risks in the short, medium, and long term.

The anticipated loss of critical earnings during the peak event season will have a compounding effect on the magnitude of financial loss and the ability for REAL to financially recover from lost event revenue.

The recovery of revenues is expected to be gradual, meaning that as public health orders are lifted, the willingness of the fans to attend various events at a pre-COVID level will happen over time. It is also critical to recognize that the majority of business at REAL is dependent upon disposable income available within the marketplace and it should be anticipated that should events be permitted to return there remains a risk in the ability for guests and patrons to spend on rentals, tickets, or food and beverage in the short to mid-term. As restrictions are lifted, REAL anticipates it will take up to 30 months before revenues are fully recovered (pre-COVID-19 levels).

As REAL's recovery plan is developed and more is known about the impacts of the pandemic, there may be a need to return in the fall to review options to further address REAL's cash flow challenges and a strategy outlining how REAL's debt position will be addressed over the longer term. The financial impacts of COVID-19 on REAL and any related debt management strategy may significantly impact the operational abilities and financial abilities of REAL for a prolonged period, resulting in an elevated risk for the organization.

RE-OPENING UPDATE

The provincial and federal governments have authority to direct response and recovery to the public health emergency. The City is following all public health recommendations, emergency orders and directives of the provincial and federal governments. Administration has developed the City's *Re-Open Plan* which is premised on how services can safely be re-opened to the public in alignment with the upcoming phases of *Re-Open Saskatchewan*.

As we deliver the programs and services our citizens rely on each and every day, our top priority remains the health and safety of our employees and community. With the exception of recreation, all other municipal services and programs have continued to be provided with additional safety measures in place to ensure a safe environment for our City employees, contractors and citizens. In some cases, service levels have been adjusted to achieve a safe environment.

The City's re-open plan is dynamic and will be revised regularly in response to public health orders or direction from the Government of Saskatchewan, as defined in the *Re-Open Saskatchewan* plan. It is expected that Government of Saskatchewan will continue to make announcements related to re-opening on an on-going basis. Factors influencing the City's decisions related to re-opening are:

- Availability of PPE
- Expansion and continued delivery of digital and virtual services
- Workplace design requirements to respect physical distancing

- Implementation dates set in *Re-Open Saskatchewan* may make seasonal services unfeasible
- Lead time required to ensure staff can be brought back to work to provide recreation services and programs

The City's plan to re-open impacted City programs and services is in Appendix A.

Transit Services

At the special Council meeting on March 20, 2020, Council considered *CM20-7 COVID-19 Update* and approved waiving transit fares so that customers could enter and exit a conventional transit bus using the rear door, allowing safe physical distancing from customers and the operator, as well as restricting multiple contacts with the farebox. *The Regina Transit Fare Bylaw, 2009* was amended to waive fares for the duration of the provincial emergency declaration. The safety concerns can now be mitigated with the addition of a safety shield and enhanced cleaning protocols allowing fare collection to resume with the repeal of the Bylaw amendment.

As a step in easing COVID-19 restrictions, Regina Transit is recommending resuming loading passengers and collecting fares at the front doors of the bus on June 29. New safety shields have been installed for the safe interaction between passengers and bus operators. Enhanced cleaning protocols continue, and the passenger limit has increased to 15 people per bus from 10 effective June 8, 2020 (consistent with Phase 3 of the *Reopen Saskatchewan* plan). Customers are encouraged to use R Cards to pay for fares since this is a touchless transaction when the card is placed close to the fare box reader.

As part of re-opening transit service, Administration recommends:

- 1) **Re-instating Fares Effective June 29** for both Conventional and Paratransit services. The plan to reinstate transit fares is consistent with other municipalities, that are slowly reintroducing transit services. Prince Albert already has transit fares in place, Saskatoon is reintroducing fares on June 8, and Edmonton will be on June 15.

Revenues collected for transit are approximately one million dollars less for April 2020 in comparison to April 2019. Even with fares resuming on June 29, it is anticipated that there will be minimal revenue for June through August since pass extensions and refunds will be processed. Overall, it is anticipated that revenues for transit will be down over five million dollars by the end of the year when compared to 2020.

- 2) **Safety Shield Installed on All Buses** – Bus operators will have customers interacting with the farebox at the front of the bus to pay their fare. To ensure that our operators remain safe and to limit contact with customers, a see-through driver screen or curtain will be installed on all buses. The estimated cost for this is \$25,000 for the entire conventional transit fleet. SGI supports and endorses that these safety shields be installed.

- 3) **Front Door Loading** – Buses are currently being loaded from the rear door since the fare boxes were put out of service. This created distance between customers and the bus operator. With fares being paid, loading at the front door is required to access the farebox. The safety shield for the operator will act as the barrier to the customers.
- 4) **Transit Information Center be Re-opened** – The Transit Information Centre will open starting June 15 to sell passes and rides with reduced hours of operation – Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Customers are reminded to ensure a two-metre physical distance when queuing for service. Customers who had passes or rides while fares were waived may qualify for an extension. Customers should contact the RideLine at 306-777-RIDE (7433) and extensions will be processed until September 11. This location has plastic shields in place for both employee and customer health and safety.

Customers that had an active pass when service was reduced will be eligible to reactivate their pass at no cost and will be provided an additional month on their card as a good will gesture.

Agents that sell transit fare across the City will also be notified that they can resume selling.

Reduced Capacity and Scheduling

At its March 20 meeting, Council considered CM20-7 and approved reduced transit service levels in response to the COVID 19 public health emergency. Saturday service is running on weekdays and Sunday service is running during the weekends. This reduced service has resulted in some areas of the City not having transit service, including Westhill, Fairways West, Maple Ridge, Lakeridge, Hawkstone and Wascana View.

In April, it was decided to delay introducing service to Westerra until the fall of 2020. At the time, it was thought that transit would resume regular service by the fall. However, transit is continuing to operate with a reduced service level, and there is no indication of when regular service may resume. Administration is recommended that Westerra service begin at the same time regular transit services are reintroduced.

Administration continues to monitor ridership and the impacts of *Re-open Saskatchewan* on transit. Once *Re-Open Saskatchewan* reaches Phase Four, the City will be in a better position to identify a timeframe for regular transit service re-introduction.

The physical distancing requirements drastically reduce the capacity of transit vehicles. Demand for transit service is increasing as more people are out in the community under the direction of *Re-Open Saskatchewan*. Regina Transit may be challenged to meet the anticipated capacity needs for riders wanting to take the bus while maintaining physical distancing. Buses currently have a limited capacity of 15 people due to the need for safe social distancing. Buses normally hold 60 passengers; thus, the system has lost 75 per cent of capacity resulting in additional buses being required to accommodate the trend of increasing transit riders.

U-Pass Program

Similar to the spring and summer semesters, the University of Regina is only providing on-line courses for the fall semester. On-line courses will result in a minimal number of students travelling to the University of Regina. The University of Regina Students Union (URSU) has advised the City that they will not be able to charge the U-Pass fee to students for the fall 2020 semester and has requested transit suspend the contract. URSU would resume the program in January 2021.

The U-Pass program is based on 100 per cent cost recovery with the fall 2020 program generating \$864,000 of revenue to the City. The program also includes additional bus service to support increased use of the transit system. If the contract for fall 2020 is suspended, the additional bus service would also be suspended. This includes:

- Route 4 Walsh Acres/Hillsdale would have frequencies reduced to 30 minutes during morning and afternoon peak periods
- Route 21 University/Glencairn would only run during peak periods
- Route 22 University/Arcola East would only run during peak periods
- Route 30 University Express/Rochdale Express would have frequencies reduced to 30 minutes during morning and afternoon peak periods

Administration is continuing to review workforce requirements in response to service level adjustments.

Parking Services

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, State of Emergency declaration made by the Province on March 18, 2020, Parking Services made the decision to reduce the level of parking enforcement services provided. On March 20, a decision was made to suspend all enforcement activities except for those that were related to safety, traffic flow or (emergency) access concerns.

The Province's Phase Three of the *Re-Open Saskatchewan* plan has a direct impact on parking. Since Phase Two of *Re-Open Saskatchewan* plan was implemented, a noticeable increase in the demand and use of parking spaces in the City has been observed, especially in the downtown area. As public health restrictions are eased, demand will continue to increase as more businesses and activity returns. The increase in traffic and activity in the city will require parking enforcement to ensure that parking options are available and that those travelling on city streets can do so safely.

Administration will re-instate parking enforcement in stages. Fees and enforcement at parking meters is resuming on June 15 with other parking enforcement beginning on June 29, including timed zones, oversized vehicles and loading zones. The plan to reinstate parking enforcement is consistent with other municipalities; and aligns with our own plans for slowly and concurrently reintroducing transit services. The City of Saskatoon resumed parking enforcement activities on May 25, and many other municipalities across Canada have begun their own re-introduction plan for parking enforcement services as more

businesses in their cities begin to re-open. This plan has been shared with the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District, the Regina Warehouse District and the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and they have all communicated their support.

Understanding that the resumption of parking enforcement services could have an impact on the many residents that continue to work from home, it is recommended that enforcement of the 24 hour overparked regulation in residential areas not resume at this time. For residents who require and qualify for a residential parking permit, alternative measures have been implemented and will remain in place until we are able to issue these permits. We will continue to honor expired permits.

Parking management and enforcement play a key role in the health and economic vitality of our city, and especially the downtown core; therefore aligning the re-instating of parking fees and enforcement with the Province's *Re-Open Saskatchewan* plan will ensure that the City is doing the most it can to support the Regina business community and contribute to their success as they begin to re-open and get back to normal operations.

Recreation Facilities

Re-Open Saskatchewan is setting the timing for re-opening of recreation facilities. The Government of Saskatchewan is making a distinction between individual and group pursuits, as well as indoor and outdoor activities. Guidelines for operating these facilities are provided and facility owners are expected to follow the guidance. The Government of Saskatchewan is continually making announcements and releasing updates to *Re-Open Saskatchewan*. The most recent changes were announced on June 8, 2020 and current information about impacted City services and programs are outlined in Appendix A.

City Hall Lobby

Re-Open Saskatchewan does not specify the timing for opening City locations where in-person citizen service, like paying bills or applying for permits or licenses, take place. Limited in-person service will resume at City Hall on June 15 from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday to Friday.

When citizens visit City Hall our staff will be available to support individuals to use our digital services in the future. Currently, digital services are available for:

- Applying for building and development permits
- Paying for your water bill, property taxes and parking tickets
- Applying for permits or licenses

The public is encouraged to continue to use digital services where possible. To meet physical distancing requirements a limited number of citizens will be able to be in the lobby at one time. Visitors to City Hall will be asked to follow directions upon arrival.

At this time, the City Hall cafeteria remains closed, and public access at other administrative office locations is not available.

Riverside Cemetery Chapel

The chapel and administration office will re-open on June 15 for those who want to visit. Indoor columbarium visits are by appointment only and limited to two visitors at a time. Cleaning will occur between appointments. During Phase Four of *Re-Open Saskatchewan*, bookings for small gatherings will be accepted and limited to eight to accommodate physical distancing.

Supporting Community Recovery

Since the last COVID-19 Update to Council, the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID) has requested the City allow an expansion of outdoor patios and restaurants, as well as waive the fees associated with permitting outdoor restaurants and mobile food vending services prescribed in Schedule "J" of *The Regina Traffic Bylaw*.

Administration is recommending this request be approved allowing restaurants to increase their available space to better accommodate physical distancing guidelines and to demonstrate support for the food service sector that has been closed for months due to COVID-19. The loss in permit fees is expected to be \$25,000.

Currently, the only provisions that allow permit fees to be waived in *The Regina Traffic Bylaw* are for charitable organizations. A bylaw amendment is required to waive the fees associated with outdoor restaurant and mobile food vending services. This bylaw amendment will be brought forward to the June 24, 2020 City Council meeting.

DECISION HISTORY

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, City Council considered *CM20-7 COVID-19 Update* on March 20, 2020 and approved the activation of the Emergency Operations Centre to respond to the crisis.

On April 15, 2020 City Council considered *CM20-8 COVID-19 Financial Update* and delegated additional powers to the City Manager during the state of emergency.

On April 29, 2020, City Council considered *CM20-11 The COVID-19 Pandemic Bylaw*, which delegated specific authorities related to a number of bylaws to the City Manager.

Most recently, City Council received *CM20-13 COVID-19 Update* at the May 27, 2020 Council meeting.

Respectfully Submitted



Chris Holden
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Re-Open Regina Plan External