

COVID-19 Update

Date	December 2, 2020
To	City Council
From	City Manager's Office
Service Area	City Manager's Office
Item No.	CM20-34

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council receive and file this report.

ISSUE

The City continues to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the dynamic nature of *Re-Open Saskatchewan*. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on numerous actions undertaken by the City of Regina since the last report was considered by Council on October 6, 2020, carried over from the September 30 Council meeting agenda.

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 residents with timely information on adjustments to the City services and programs. In addition, the City encourages our community to follow public health orders and reinforces health messaging from provincial and federal public health officials. The most recent campaign focuses on mandatory mask usage on transit and in indoor public settings.

This information continues to be promoted on Regina.ca/COVID-19, social media platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, and throughout paid marketing campaigns. The City continues to issue public service announcements and provide opportunities for regular media briefings.

Communications strategies have been developed for specific service changes, including the introduction of safety protocols like the availability of hand sanitizer, safety shields, signage and physical distancing decals in appropriate locations, as well as modifications in service delivery.

DISCUSSION

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) continues to operate at Level 1 activation. This consists of a virtual set up with two City staff monitoring the evolving situation with trigger points that could move the City to Level 2 activation. Level 2 activation would see a partial opening of a physical EOC. Trigger points include urgent and sweeping lockdowns dictated by the Province, City outbreaks and critical service interruptions, as well as field hospital activation. City staff remain in regular contact with partner agencies and the Saskatchewan Health Authority as part of monitoring.

CITY SERVICES 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. The City's response is dynamic and is premised on how services can safely be re-opened to the public in alignment with the upcoming phases of *Re-Open Saskatchewan*. Adjustments by the City are made in tandem with changing public health orders or direction from the Government of Saskatchewan over time.

Transit Services

Transit staff are reporting passengers are complying with mandatory masking requirements at a rate of 99 per cent. Additional staff were hired on October 28, 2020 to support enforcement measures to ensure all passengers are wearing masks. All buses are randomly checked for compliance throughout the day. For passengers not wearing a mask, they are offered one for free. If they refuse to wear a mask without identifying that it is due to medical reasons, passengers are required to leave the bus. Sanitizer stations have been installed on each bus as well as increased distribution and availability of masks prior to boarding.

Communications for mandatory mask use on transit was increased with the message 'Mask Up to Keep Numbers Down'. The media plan includes online, social media, radio, bus ads and shelter ads that target New Canadians, low income, high school students (ages 13-17) and high school student's parents. Students are targeted via Instagram and Snapchat stories. The campaign runs in market until early December. The campaign launch coincided with the Saskatchewan Health Authority implementing new mask measures with mandatory masks in indoor public spaces. Since November 11, 2020, ridership has declined on both transit and paratransit systems. Partnered annual events, such as Jingle Bus and Wing in the New Year have been cancelled for 2020 to minimize contracting or spreading COVID-19.

Recreation Facilities

Re-Open Saskatchewan sets the parameters for operating of recreation facilities. The Government of Saskatchewan is continually making announcements and releasing updates to *Re-Open Saskatchewan*. The most recent restrictions were announced on November 27, 2020. The impacts to City recreational facilities and services are outlined below.

INDOOR FACILITIES

Fieldhouse:

- All adult user group activities are cancelled.
- Fitness classes will be reduced to a maximum of eight participants. Most fitness classes were already operating under this guideline, and the remaining classes will now be reduced in size. Impacted customers have been contacted.
- There will be no tennis or badminton allowed at the Fieldhouse except youth practices, conditioning and skills training.

Arenas:

- All adult user group activities are cancelled.
- Minor games have also been cancelled. Minor sport practices and training will continue with a maximum of eight participants per sheet of ice (excluding coaches). All participants must be masked and maintain a three-metre physical distance.
- Administration is assessing how best to manage the public skate program with the masking and distancing requirement and continue to date.

Pools:

- All adult user group activities are cancelled.
- Minor group activities will continue, with a reduced capacity to eight swimmers per tank. User group training at the Lawson Aquatic Centre have been paused until December 3, 2020 to allow for pool space to be reallocated according to group demand and to comply with the new restrictions.
- Swimming lessons have been paused until the end of this session which is December 4, 2020. Administration is exploring how to deliver this program in the future.

- All public swims, lane swimming, fitness activities and group fitness classes will continue; however, fitness activities and group fitness classes will be limited to eight participants.

Neighbourhood Centres:

- All adult sport user group activities are cancelled.
- All fitness classes will be reduced to a maximum of eight participants. Most fitness classes were already operating under this guideline, and the remaining classes will now be reduced in size. Impacted customers have been contacted.

Non-fitness activities will continue as per the guidelines.

OUTDOOR PROGRAMS & FACILITIES

The City has been innovative and creative with offering existing and new recreational services to the community during the pandemic. The City has developed a Winter Programming Initiative that will work together with the community to deliver more winter activities through dedicated grant funding and enhanced winter programming. Included in this initiative is a \$25,000 grant program offered by the City that will be administered through the Community Investment Grants Program. Grants will range from \$500 to \$5,000 and will be awarded to help fund outdoor winter programs and activities throughout the community.

The City is also offering additional sport, recreation and cultural activities, including:

Rinks:

- All outdoor skating shelters (34 in total) that meet size and condition expectations will be open for a minimum of 15 hours per week.
- Community Associations will receive an increase in their supervision grant, as well as additional funds towards cleaning. Benches will be added to those locations that currently don't have any. Cleaning protocols and supplies will be provided to the Community Association.
- A number of sites across the city will be operated by City staff. At these sites, City staff will clean and supervise for a minimum of 15 hours per week. Demonstrations and other programming will be made available as possible.

Outdoor Programs:

- Outdoor winter programming is planned, such as family snowshoeing, touchless geocaching and snow sculpting.
- The City is also exploring partnership opportunities with organizations such as local curling clubs and the Buffalo People Arts Institute on an outdoor storytelling initiative.

Therapeutic Recreation:

- A one of a kind therapeutic recreation pilot program is being implemented in partnership with Eden Care Communities to encourage older adults/seniors who may have been socially isolated as a result of the pandemic to get active.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY

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. Additional safety measures have been put in place, including increased cleaning protocols, physical distancing and physical barriers, mask usage, as well as modified scheduling and service delivery methods which will continue to be used throughout the pandemic. The City is also focusing on employee mental health throughout the pandemic and has launched a series of Wellness in the Workplace virtual sessions as part of the overall Healthy Workplace program.

Re-Open Saskatchewan recommends employees continue to, where feasible, work remotely through all phases. Up to 770 administrative and professional staff (27.5 per cent of City workforce) have been effectively performing work functions at home during earlier periods of the pandemic. Over the summer months approximately 150 Managers, Directors and other required staff returned to the physical workplace as the community reopened.

Although we have been successful at maintaining a safe workplace since our return to the physical workplace, there is an increasing presence of COVID-19 in our community. In order to do our part to slow the recent spread of COVID-19 and reduce strain on contact tracing, effective November 27, 2020, as many administrative and professional staff as possible will return to working from home until January 29, 2021. With over 60 lines of business, each area requires different work arrangements for their operational needs. Change in work location can occur quickly and seamlessly since City of Regina was an early adopter of Office 365 technology, mobile devices, remote access to systems and robust cyber security measures.

COVID-19 2020 FINANCIAL UPDATE

Administration continues to monitor the financial impacts of COVID-19 on City finances and update Council on a regular basis. Up to date financial information will be forthcoming over the upcoming weeks as part of regular financial reporting and 2021 budget discussions.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY RECOVERY

Regina Economic Recovery Grant Program

Council has approved the creation of a Regina Economic Recovery Grant Program (RERG) to provide financial support for local businesses. RERG recognizes businesses that are reshaping services or products to meet changing customer expectations, public health requirements and market demand by providing matching funding to support these efforts. RERG aims to fill gaps in funding support from other levels of government and provide more wholesome and impactful support for the Regina business community as it recovers from COVID-19.

Online applications for Phase 1 funding for matching grants of \$1,000, \$2,500 or \$5,000 opened on Regina.ca in August 2020. Since opening, 127 grants for \$278,500 have been approved. A summary of the grants provided are:

Business Classification	Number of Grants Awarded	Funds Awarded
Accommodation or Food Service	37	80,500
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	18	53,500
Construction	1	2,500
Educational Services	7	15,500
Healthcare and Social Assistance	8	20,500
Manufacturing	1	1,000
Other Services	28	52,000
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	7	13,000
Retail Trade	20	40,000
Total	127	278,500

In Phase 2 of RERG, the maximum matching grant amount will increase to \$25,000. The program will be capped. If there are more applicants than available funding, the adjudication committee will award based on most qualified using the program criteria. Administration is currently working to launch Phase 2 in mid-December 2020.

Mobilization of Community Social Services

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, the City of Regina has been leading discussions with organizations delivering service to vulnerable populations, focused on coordinating response to meet service gaps. The participating agencies include emergency and second stage shelters, food security agencies and drop-in centres.

Through the spring this resulted in a new lunch program delivered by REACH, the City, and REAL to address the gap left for families when schools closed. The program also included enhanced communications to raise awareness of community supports, access to PPE and cleaning supplies through City of Regina procurement, and sharing revised processes as everyone adapted to the new reality of service delivery.

Additional issues that were not able to be addressed directly by those agencies were escalated to the Minister of Social Services. These have included concerns about reduced shelter capacity and social isolation for vulnerable individuals without access to internet or devices.

With rising case numbers and the onset of winter, these issues continue to be a source of concern for front line agencies. While the Ministry of Social Services has not initiated any expansion of emergency shelters or warm up spaces, several agencies have initiated a partnership to activate additional overnight shelter spaces and a day-time drop in location subject to funding from the City and Government of Saskatchewan. REACH, the primary agency delivering food security programs in schools, has adapted its model to account for less access to schools, and has indicated a willingness to partner with the City again to expand programming should schools close again.

Community wellbeing and safety continues to be a priority for our community and further information will be provided in the coming weeks and months.

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.

On May 27, 2020, City Council received *CM20-13 COVID-19 Update* which included information on COVID-19 related decisions made by the City Manager through delegated authority and an update on the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program funding announcement.

City Council received *CM20-20 COVID-19 Update* at the June 30, 2020 Council meeting which covered the re-open plans for the City of Regina.

On July 29, 2020, City Council approved *CR20-68 COVID19-Response - Property Tax Relief* which established the Economic Grant Recovery Program to provide financial support for local businesses.

A Notice of Motion *MN20-22 Mandatory Masks* was tabled and considered at the August 26, 2020 Council meeting which led to the generation of *CM20-30 COVID-19 Update: Motion MN20-22 Mandatory Masks* that was tabled on September 30, 2020.

CM20-30 COVID-19 Update was on the agenda of the September 30, 2020 City Council meeting and was considered by Council on October 6, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted



Chris Holden
City Manager