

Community Recovery Framework

June 17, 2020

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a worldwide impact on public health, communities and economies. The City of Mississauga, like many others, has shifted focus from containing the initial outbreak to planning for recovery and a 'new normal'.

On May 13, 2020, Council endorsed a "COVID19 Recovery Framework" which provides a framework for recovery operations in the City of Mississauga. The principles of the framework and recovery planning are:

- Protect the Health and Safety of the Public and Employees
- Phased Approach
- Mental Wellness & Psychosocial Support
- Building Back Better
- Whole Community Approach

The report identified four pillars of recovery, each to be detailed in a separate report. These pillars are:



Community



Economic



Financial



Corporate

This plan addresses the Community recovery pillar. This pillar focuses on the services, tactics and programs that are public-facing, and impact Mississauga's residents directly. Most of this plan will reference activities led by the Community Services Department, however there are many other City business units that support and resource this pillar, in addition to the Region of Peel and many community agencies and organizations.

Background

As the COVID-19 crisis escalated in early March 2020, the community impact was seen with the cancellation of large events, then smaller events and gatherings along with March Break camp programming. Very quickly, the City determined further closures were necessary for the safety of staff and the public, and all community centres, libraries and cultural facilities were closed.

These closures resulted in hundreds of program and event cancellations across the City. This included a wide array of activities, including:

- Cancellation of all events at Paramount Fine Foods Centre, including the termination of Raptors 905 and Steelheads OHL Hockey seasons and playoffs.
- Cancellation of scheduled events at the Living Arts Centre, Meadowvale Theatre and Celebration Square.
- Cancellation of all weddings and special events booked at Harding Estate, C-Banquets and other venues across the City.
- Cancellation of minor hockey playoffs, championships and spring tournaments.
- Cancellation of all community programs, library programming, arts and culture programming and closure of fitness centres, pools and park gathering areas.
- Delayed start to all spring/summer sports such as soccer, baseball, cricket, lacrosse, football, field hockey, tennis and many others.

In addition, many community organizations were impacted as Board meetings could not proceed (eventually authorized to meet electronically), services could not be provided to clients and in some cases, funding was impacted and employee lay-offs required.

The social impact has also been significant. The nature of the pandemic required all residents to retreat to their homes and only leave for essential work or shopping. Older adults in particular have been isolated as the public

health direction has been strongly recommending that they remain in their homes. Family gatherings were not possible, celebrations, funerals and many other important social and community connections had to be done virtually or at a distance. Residents have been unable to visit their family members in hospital or long-term care. This 'social' distancing has perhaps been the most difficult aspect of the crisis.

As the City of Mississauga begins to move through the phases of reopening and recovery, these impacts must be addressed.

Our Response

Following the initial actions to close facilities and cancel programs and events, the City of Mississauga turned its attention to supporting the response to this crisis and mitigating immediate impacts to the community. City Council and staff have taken many actions to support the community during this challenging time. Some of the key activities include:

1. **Listening to Our Community:** Led by Mayor Crombie and Council, the City hosted several virtual meetings for community groups impacted by the crisis, including Older Adults, Sports, Arts & Cultural, Tourism, Small Business, Business Improvement Areas and others. These consultations early on in the crisis allowed the City to gain a clear understanding of the issues the community was facing and to identify actions and next steps where the City could help. It also provided an opportunity for information sharing and connection among stakeholders, during a time when many were feeling isolated and disconnected from their community.
2. **Using Policy Tools to Mitigate Impact:** Informed partly by the consultations with stakeholders, staff and Council were able to leverage some of the City's policy tools to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the community. These included: deferral of taxes, rent and other payments due to the City, refunds and credits for services not



being used or cancelled events and programs, the continued distribution of grant funding, among other decisions made by Council to assist the community.

3. **Working with Partners:** As this is a public health crisis first and foremost, the Region of Peel became an important partner in the response. The City has relied on Peel Public Health to provide guidance on closures and continued operations, and has worked in partnership with the Region to respond to the needs of our most vulnerable residents. The City provided facilities for use by Public Health for a recovery site, and has established two mobile shower locations on City property to support the health and well-being of those experiencing homelessness while access to public facilities is not currently possible. The Library's Open Window Hub team has continued its support to the vulnerable populations as well during this time.

City staff have also participated on the Regional Community Response Table – providing input into funding for the community organizations who are actively responding to this crisis and helping residents with their need for food and other necessities.

The City has partnered with the Raptors 905 and Hand Up Toronto to use Paramount Fine Foods Centre as a storage and distribution site for food – with large quantities being delivered to local food banks and charities, along with a drive-through family food box program.

These are just some of the ways the City has stepped up in the community to support other agencies and organizations in their response; from making straps for shields using Library 3D printers, to donating spring flowers to hospital staff, to contributing food inventory directly to the food bank – there have been many small initiatives that have helped during this time.

4. **Staying Connected & Communicating:** The isolating nature of this crisis reinforced the need for frequent and clear communication to our residents and community partners. The City has taken many steps to ensure the community is informed, including:

- Weekly virtual Council meetings with an opportunity for public questions.
- Tele-Townhalls
- Phone messaging from the Mayor
- E-newsletters
- Dedicated COVID-19 web page for residents
- Dedicated information for Older Adults – a particularly isolated group – delivered online and in the Mississauga News.
- Messaging across all of the City's platforms: web, social media, digital signage, physical signs, mobile signs, etc.

As the initial critical messaging needs from public health slowed down, City staff were able to work on other programs and services to allow residents to stay connected to the activities they were missing. Quickly adapting to the need for 'virtual' programs, many new initiatives were launched, including:



- Fitness exercises and tips on social media
- Online live fitness classes
- Virtual storytime
- Seniors coffee chats and programming 'by phone/web'
- Virtual fireworks for Victoria Day
- Virtual Canada Day
- Virtual museum tours
- Downloadable colouring kits
- Online arts and crafts
- Video chats with keynote speakers, authors and book clubs

These programs were fast-tracked to launch quickly and ensure the community could feel some semblance of 'normal', remain connected to the activities they love, and to promote both physical and mental health and wellness.

All of these response actions were implemented to quickly address the needs of the community and to use the tools and resources of the City to the extent possible. Many of these continue as the recovery and reopening phases have started, and many will likely be a key part of 'building back better'.

Moving into Recovery – Reopening & Restoring Services

In May 2020, as the initial 6-8 weeks of response to the crisis concluded, the Province and Public Health turned their attention to recovery and reopening, with a response needed from the City at every step. With so many unknowns about this disease, the regulations and direction from these leading agencies has been rolled out quickly and with frequent changes and adjustments. The City has been required to be very flexible and to adapt to this ever-changing environment with limited lead time and information – yet the community is looking to the City for direction and answers. It has been a challenging time but Council and staff have continued to work together to ensure the key principles of “Protecting the Health and Safety of the Public and Employees” and “Phased Approach” are the deciding factors in recovery and reopening. The first phases of recovery entail the reopening and restoration of services, where closures and cancellations had occurred. Each service being restored requires a plan of its own, as this reopening comes with new regulations, guidelines and safety measures – while COVID-19 is still a risk and no vaccine is available.

There is no playbook for operating services in the community under these circumstances. Guidelines are being developed quickly, in consultation with Public Health, governing agencies, municipal counterparts and sector associations. The services that have been restored under these modified conditions include:

- Park amenities and access
- Golf courses
- Summer day camp programs
- Pools
- Library holds and returns
- Resident artists (LAC)
- Most city building tenants
- Sport fields and summer sports
- Arenas and ice sports



- Farmer's Markets
- Some limited outdoor gatherings
- Museum tours

There are still a great deal of limitations on the above services and many more services still to reopen, such as:

- Library building public access
- Community centre public access
- Meeting rooms and event bookings
- Fitness Centres
- Event and Theatre venues
- In-person programs – Recreation, Culture, Library
- Community events and festivals
- Sport tourism events
- Outdoor playgrounds and fitness equipment
- Mississauga Seniors Centre

As the direction from Public Health and the Province allow, these services will continue to reopen under new guidelines, and over time, it is expected that each service area will gradually resume to a more 'normal' state of operation.

Continuing Recovery - Building Back Better & Whole Community Approach

There are many long-term impacts of the closure, cancellation and even modified return to these services for the community. City facilities are a major point of access for many community groups and organizations. City programs are the affordable, accessible option for many residents, especially those most vulnerable. And the City's sport fields and facilities, along with fitness centres, classes, therapeutic and inclusion programs are the backbone of physical literacy, health and wellness and recovery for our residents of all ages and demographics. As the City moves further into recovery, it will be critical to assess the impact this limited access has had on the community – from a financial, mental and physical well-being perspective.

The longer-term impacts to be considered with recovery will be best reviewed through the lens of existing strategic and community plans and programs. Plans that need to be updated and revised for 'COVID-19 modifications' include the Older Adult Plan for Recreation, the Youth Plan, Sport Plan and the business models for the Paramount Fine Foods Centre, Living Arts Centre and other venues. In addition, through the Community Group Support Program Policy, continued engagement and development of tools will be needed to support the community groups that deliver so many important services to the residents of Mississauga. This could include adjustments to the Community and/or Culture Grant Programs, Active Assist fee assistance program, training resources, access to insurance and other important tools for these not for profit organizations.

Building back better has been a key principle in the framework for recovery planning and certainly will apply as support for community recovery moves forward. Many services that have been moved online or virtually may still benefit from a continuation of this platform. The adoption of technology in many areas has been forced during this crisis – this can be an opportunity longer term, as many strategic plans have included plans for leveraging technology. Tools such as booking appointments and access online, applying



for permits and city services, hosting virtual meetings – these will all be opportunities for continued improved service in future.

Additional consultation and engagement with key stakeholders and residents across the City will be required as the City moves into a more mature state of recovery. This will allow the City to determine strategic changes to plans and programs as everyone gains a better understanding of ‘the new normal’. It is difficult to plan ahead at this time, given the frequency of change of information and direction. It is also difficult for the City to commit to financial initiatives in supporting community recovery, while the City itself is incurring such significant deficits and revenue impacts. Future supporting programs will need to align with the Financial recovery plan and pillar. In the meantime, staff continue to bring to Council the plans to reopen and recover, while minimizing the financial impact to the organization.

Next Steps

While the response to the pandemic has been ongoing since March, the recovery has only just begun. Next steps in the Community pillar of recovery include:

- Continue to reopen services and facilities as regulations permit, developing plans to ensure compliance with new public health guidelines.
- Consult and communicate with groups and stakeholders impacted with each reopening plan (sports groups, rental customers, event organizers, etc.) – identifying areas for accommodation and adjustment that are within the City’s control and financial resources.
- Begin the review of key strategic plans and community support programs to identify changes or additions based on recovery impacts – Older Adult, Youth, Sport, grants, etc.
- Plan follow-up engagement with community groups once recovery is well underway, to understand longer term issues and opportunities to better support these stakeholders and residents. Target Fall 2020 for these engagements.
- Identify opportunities to continue supporting the community through partnerships – leverage existing organizations, funding sources and people resources – to advance recovery and return to ‘normal’.
- Incorporate longer term initiatives with financial impact into future budget and planning, once the City has solidified its financial recovery.

Conclusion

Community recovery efforts will help to ensure that residents continue to choose to live in the City of Mississauga based on community amenities, support networks, activities, and other facets that make Mississauga a great place to live. Through the City’s work with its many community stakeholders - Affiliated and Community Sport Providers, Arts & Culture Providers, BIA’s, Community Service Organizations, Community Stewardship Providers, Older Adult Clubs, Ratepayer Resident Groups, Youth Organizations and others - residents will be encouraged to join and participate in opportunities to re-engage in our vibrant municipal life.

Mississauga. Strong. Ready.

