



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 22, 2021
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	COVID-19 Recovery Framework (CM21003) (Outstanding Business List)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Lisa Zinkewich (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5312
SUBMITTED BY:	Janette Smith City Manager
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Hamilton City Council, at its meeting of January 20, 2021, received correspondence from the Just Recovery Hamilton Coalition and referred it to the City Manager for review and report back, with an assessment of what the City can and has acted on. Report CM21003 highlights the City's overall COVID-19 recovery framework, including an update on alignment with the Just Recovery Hamilton Coalition policy paper and the status of Council's motion, from its May 13, 2020 meeting, to establish a sub-committee to address the impacts of social issues related to the City's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

INFORMATION

Recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been on the minds of City leadership since as far back as May 2020, when Hamilton Reopens: A Roadmap to our new reality (HCS20019) was presented to Council. At that time, the city and province were emerging from the first wave of the pandemic. COVID-19 still existed in our community and those that most greatly felt the impact of the pandemic were being supported through partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders across our community and with financial support from both the provincial and federal governments.

With cautious optimism, the hope was that, through a slow restart to businesses and a measured approach to the reopening of municipal services, we could adjust to living

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

with COVID-19 as part of our community until the development and distribution of vaccines.

By the fall of 2020 we were into the second, then third wave of the pandemic, causing most long-term recovery planning efforts, including the establishment of a sub-committee to address social recovery, to be paused as focus reverted to supporting the prolonged emergency response. Today, the province is in Step 3 of its Roadmap to Reopen. At this time, due to rising COVID-19 case activity and the fourth wave of the pandemic, the province has paused plans to exit from the Roadmap to Reopen. All existing public health measures remain in place, with an enhanced province wide COVID-19 vaccine certificate system coming into effect on September 22, 2021. In the City of Hamilton, the priority continues to be on achieving equitable and high levels of vaccination coverage to ensure all eligible residents, those born 2009 or earlier, have strong protection against COVID-19.

Due to a comprehensive and sustained vaccination program run by Hamilton Public Health Services and its health care partners, ensuring access to two doses of COVID-19 vaccine for all eligible residents, those born 2009 and earlier, as of September 13, 2021, 74.2% of Hamiltonians are fully vaccinated.

The pandemic isn't over and although the lifting of some public health measures has allowed some sectors to begin to think about longer term recovery, the City remains in emergency response mode. The speed at which we move through recovery, and which sectors are able to recover faster, will continue to be dependent on the continued rise of vaccination rates, continued financial support from senior levels of government, staff capacity, future COVID-19 scenarios, impacts of variants and direction, orders and advice of local or provincial Medical Officers of Health and any provincial orders.

Future COVID-19 Scenarios

Local modelling estimates that the current wave will likely peak around mid-October. What the future holds however is unclear regarding both development of additional variants that may be more or less transmissible or severe, how long vaccine protection will last or whether it will extend to any new variants. The province has provided local communities with four scenarios on which to base their planning. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive and could occur simultaneously:

1. Increasing cases with decreased severity due to vaccination,
2. Entry of cases into unvaccinated populations,
3. Waning immunity in subpopulations, and
4. New variant not covered by the current vaccines.

Response to these scenarios will continue to require a mix of provincial and local actions, and the degree of impact of both the pandemic itself and the control measures required to be kept or put in place, will continue to impact the degree and pace of recovery.

Continued Emergency Response

COVID-19 variants and the status of cases will continue to be tracked and monitored for impacts on the community and the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) will continue to operate as required. Where necessary, the EOC will, under the delegated authority of the Emergency Management Program By-law 17-277, pursuant to the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (the "Act"), continue to address any time-sensitive health and safety issues to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Hamilton's Public Health Services, along with their healthcare partners, will continue to ensure equitable access to vaccines to increase protection against COVID-19 across our community. With the careful and measured wind-down of the city's three large-scale mass vaccination clinics and a shift to smaller clinics across the community, the city is taking a more targeted approach to help boost vaccine rates. Through the use of mobile clinics in low coverage areas, school based clinics, local vaccine ambassadors, trusted members and leaders of select communities, primary care practices, pharmacies and faith-based leaders, efforts are being taken to ensure all areas of the city reach target vaccination rates.

When appropriate, the EOC will deactivate. While public health and the health system response has done interim debriefings and evaluations periodically throughout the response, following the City EOC deactivation, a comprehensive review of the City's COVID-19 pandemic response will be undertaken, co-led by Public Health Services and the City's Emergency Management Coordinators. It will include various methodologies including surveys, interviews and other means of consultation, with a goal of getting feedback on the City's COVID-19 response, including from Council members. Although it is not anticipated that this review will be complete until sometime in 2022, a report will be brought forward to Council outlining results and highlighting steps that will be taken to ensure effective emergency responses in the future.

Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all aspects of society and the economy. In part, this can be attributed to the length of the pandemic which continues today, as well as the extensive measures put in place to control the spread of the virus and protect the overall health of the community.

To address the greatest impacts of the pandemic, the City is focusing recovery efforts in the following areas:

- Municipal service recovery
- Term of Council priorities
- Economic recovery
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Municipal financing
- Return to the workplace and employee mental health and wellbeing

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

The City recognizes that the social impacts of the pandemic have been significant and social recovery will be an important component of each area.

Municipal Service Recovery

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has taken concerted efforts to protect the health and wellbeing of its residents and staff in the delivery of municipal services to the community, while ensuring business continuity wherever possible. This resulted in essential services being delivered with public health measures in place, the introduction of many digital services and where digital service delivery was not an option, programs and/or activities were paused, modified or reduced when emergency measures became the priority and certain activities were restricted. When the province entered Step 2 of its revised Roadmap to Reopen on June 30, 2021, the City was able to resume many of its impacted services, with most remaining services reopening when it entered Step 3 on July 16, 2021.

Today, although most services have returned and digital enhancements continue, service delivery remains modified in many service areas per provincial directions and public health guidelines. This includes the ongoing use of visitor screening protocols, infection control measures, use of personal protective equipment and capacity and gathering limits. These impacts continue to be most greatly felt in the service areas that were delivered throughout the pandemic in support of our vulnerable populations such as long-term care, child care services and paramedic services. Where services that were paused have been able to resume, such as recreation programming, capacity limits and related impact to services, will continue.

During the peak of the City's emergency response and vaccine distribution, some services and Council directed Outstanding Business items were impacted by the redeployment of staff. With the shift in focus around how vaccines are delivered to the community, most employees that had been redeployed returned to their home positions in August 2021. An example of a program that experienced impacts as a result of redeployments is in the area of climate change. Although there has been progress with the approval of the Corporate Energy and Sustainability Policy, Green Fleet Strategy and the acceleration of the Home Energy Retrofit Opportunity Detailed Design Study, other work in support of the Climate Change term of Council priority, has been delayed. A climate mitigation and adaptation update report will be brought forward to Council in Fall 2021.

Additional delays will continue to be experienced in some program areas as employees that are playing a key role in the emergency response have unused vacation time that will be taken in the future.

Where a service has been disproportionately impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, specific focused efforts to support recovery will be required. Some of these services and next steps are highlighted below. Many City services are still grappling

with the challenges posed by COVID-19, particularly in the areas where emergency response efforts have been significant since the start of the pandemic, including public health services, long term care and other City services that support the City's vulnerable populations. Leadership in these program areas have begun to turn their minds to what a post-pandemic recovery will look like, while continuing daily emergency response efforts in collaboration with City partners, every day. As a result, there are not staff resources to support the establishment of the social issues sub-committee of Council at this time.

As recovery work evolves in these and other areas, individual reports will be brought forward to Council outlining specific recommendations and actions. In addition, information around the future of some services impacted by the pandemic will also be provided as part of the 2022 – 2025 budget process.

Business continuity and advancing digitally enabled service delivery

In the early days of the pandemic, the City had to work quickly to facilitate remote working and telecommuting for nearly a quarter of our workforce while identifying opportunities through innovation to re-imagine many services that were no longer able to be offered in person. This included enhanced phone payment services for some service areas and the addition or expansion of online service offerings to ensure business continuity. Some of the digitally enabled service delivery options that emerged during the pandemic included:

- Committee and Council meetings;
- launch of engage.hamilton.ca, the City new public engagement platform;
- Permitting and payment processes including film permits, burn permits and burial permits;
property records, bulk pickup and green cart and blue bin requests;
- application processes including Ontario works, child care fee subsidies, marriage licenses and development reviews;
- early resolution meetings and virtual trials readiness, as well as approval and electronic filings for Part 3 POA (Provincial Offences Administration);
- introduction of apps to support cashless municipal parking payment and HSRNow, a mobile-friendly trip planner; and
- recreation ticketing reservation system.

Some City events were able to continue by moving online, including the 2020 Arts Award Event.

Advancements related to digital municipal service delivery practices will continue through recovery and beyond. Some examples of continued enhancements include:

- A review of existing live captioning and closed captioning to all local board and committee meetings, increasing the availability of Committee meetings on both

the City's website and/or the City's YouTube Channel in support virtual delegations and greater access to the decision-making process;

- Creation of a public engagement policy for Council approval to provide guidance to staff on integrating the use of the Engage Hamilton virtual engagement tool with traditional in person public engagement tools when they resume;
- Transformation of the home management program, a program that teaches life skills to vulnerable individuals, families and groups, from in person coaching to virtual coaching, allowing more time for staff to connect with clients and freeing up capacity to take on additional clients;
- Continued implementation of the City's information technology mobility strategy and roadmap to enable City staff to connect from anywhere in the city at any time to the information they require. Going forward, with the need for remote work technology and mobility tools continuing, the strategy and roadmap will provide guidance on corporate policies, standards, security and education;
- Continued collaboration between the City of Hamilton and its community partners and stakeholders to look at opportunities to enhance access to internet services and improve broadband capabilities across the City. This will increase greater equitable access to high-speed internet to support the different working and learning models that emerged as a result of the pandemic. This includes looking at opportunities to increase indoor and outdoor Wi- Fi access at all Hamilton Public Library (HPL) branches, ongoing engagement between the City's Digital Office and Rogers, Bell, Telus and Cogeco to explore program offerings that can be implemented to alleviate the digital divide and continued advocacy through City letters of support to internet service providers for funding applications around Provincial and Federal Broadband initiatives. A report will be brought forward to Council in 2022 identifying opportunities to reduce the digital divide.

Other innovative programs introduced to support business continuity and the community include:

- Outdoor dining districts program which enables restaurants, bars and cafes to expand their operating and service area into the outdoor and public realm space creating new patios and opportunities for placemaking;
- Delivery of creative recreation services to help residents keep active such as:
 - Winter in Hamilton - a collection of winter activities, sports and other safe things for residents to do outside
 - Frosty Fun - special outdoor activities and virtual programming
 - Recreation at the Park - free activity kits for children to take home and physically distanced children's activities
 - Seniors Centre Without Walls - free recreational and social activities over the phone with a group of older adults in the community
- With financial support from the Patrick J. McNally Charitable Foundation, in support of reimagining and reinventing public spaces, Hamilton's placemaking grant pilot program funds community-led placemaking projects to animate public

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

spaces, most recently funding a children's garden in Gage Park, an art installation in Woodlands Park and seed libraries in Dundas.

As part of the recovery of city services, the City will continue to look for opportunities to expand, improve and modernize service offerings, ensuring the citizen is at the forefront of service delivery models. The rebuild of the City website in 2022 will be a key deliverable in being able to continue to provide enhanced access to information and digital services in the future.

Transit

At the onset of the pandemic, transit agencies worldwide saw ridership plunge. In April 2020, HSR's ridership dropped 74% compared to April 2019. HSR ceased fare collection between the end of March 2020 until July 2020 while it reacted to and implemented recommended health guidelines to keep employees and customers safe. At the end of July 2021, ridership remains at only 50.1% of 2019 levels. Consistent with the provincial reopening and loosening of restrictions, HSR has seen incremental increases in ridership since May 2021, compared to the same time period in 2020.

Although ridership is still not expected to hit pre-COVID levels in the foreseeable future, increased ridership is expected as students return to classrooms and campuses in the fall. As such, planned service enhancements, as set out in the 10-year local transit strategy, are continuing.

HSR continues to advocate through provincial and federal transit associations for continued funding in support of revenue shortfalls. A detailed report outlining the City's transit ridership recovery strategy will be brought forward to Council in November 2021.

City Mobility

Approved in June 2020, the COVID-19 Recovery Phase Mobility Plan responded to changes in mobility patterns as a result of COVID-19 and public health guidelines. It focused on ensuring that as many trips as possible could be supported using sustainable transportation modes, consistent with the goals of the City-wide [Transportation Master Plan \(TMP\)](#), while focussing on measures already identified and anticipated in the City's existing TMP and [Cycling Master Plan](#).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Hamilton had one of its busiest periods ever with respect to adding new cycling infrastructure in the city. This includes major initiatives such as the Jay Keddy Trail on the Claremont Access and the expanded Hunter Street cycle track, as well as new and/or enhanced cycling infrastructure in locations such as Cannon Street, Hatt Street, Stone Church Road East, Locke Street, Melvin Avenue and North Waterdown Road.

In addition, on September 9, 2021 the General Issues Committee (Council approval pending September 15, 2021) approved the execution of a memorandum of

understanding with Metrolinx and the Ministry of Transportation for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit Project. This agreement was the result of a \$3.4B funding commitment from provincial and federal governments to support the construction of the Hamilton B-Line LRT from Eastgate Square to McMaster University. The construction of this higher order transit line is in alignment with both the City's TMP and the 10-year Transit Strategy.

Reports will be brought forward as required to continue to increase safe alternative transportation options in support of the goals of the Transportation Master Plan.

Road Safety

As highlighted in the above transit and city mobility sections, changes in mobility patterns were caused by COVID-19 restrictions. Although rush hour traffic volumes are rebounding from the 50% average reduction in vehicular traffic volumes experienced between April 2020 to December 2020, they are nowhere near pre-pandemic levels. Although there has been a 33.2% reduction in total collisions and a 22.5% reduction in injury collisions compared to 2019, collisions that did occur in 2020 resulted in serious injuries more often. The percentage of collisions involving injuries versus the total number of collisions increased from 15% in 2019 to 17.4% in 2020. Hamilton is not alone in this trend. Concerns related to speeding and aggressive driving increased across the country, with the increase in fatalities being attributed to careless and dangerous driving (speeding).

As highlighted the Annual Collision Report – 2020 Statistics and Trends (PW21047), received by Council in August 2021, road safety remains a priority. Additional information on emerging trends and required actions will be brought forward to Council in support of the Council approved [Hamilton Strategic Road Safety Program and Vision Zero Action Plan \(2019 – 2025\)](#) and to address impacts of COVID-19 on all road users.

Housing

Addressing homelessness and affordable housing remains a critical Council priority, as demonstrated through the approval by Council in August 2020 of the [10-year Housing & Homelessness Action Plan](#) (CS11017(d)). The action plan is a solution-focused, person-centred plan that guides decision making on how the Hamilton community addresses issues related to affordable housing and homelessness.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, housing services faced additional pressures within the homeless-serving system related to emergency shelter capacity and outreach resources along with the notable rise in, and visibility of, unsheltered homelessness and encampments.

The impacts of COVID-19 on congregate living settings created new requirements related to personal protective equipment, physical spacing and modified capacity within existing facilities. To mitigate challenges on emergency shelter settings, additional

locations have been operating on a temporary basis including at the FirstOntario Centre (now decommissioned) and at the former Cathedral School location. In addition, the City secured temporary hotel space and case management operations for men, women, families and couples which helped address capacity issues. In support of providing ongoing interventions to transition from COVID-19 emergency response actions to a more stable and sustainable, evidence led housing system, in June 2021, Council approved Report HSC20020(c), which supports the continued adaptation and transformation of services for people experiencing homelessness.

During the pandemic, the cost of housing in Hamilton has significantly increased and the need for more affordable housing has become a focus for all three levels of government. One of the initiatives underway to increase the affordable housing supply is the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), a federal program delivered through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). To date (July 2021), Hamilton has received a total of \$12.9M to build 94 new affordable homes in support of vulnerable populations through this program.

During COVID-19, the City also expanded zoning permissions for secondary dwelling units (accessory apartments, laneway houses, coach houses) to allow owners of single detached, semi-detached or townhouses in the urban area to add either an additional unit within the house or build a separate dwelling unit on the lot or both, and to allow residents within in the rural area to build accessory apartments. The benefits of adding new dwelling units in neighbourhoods include providing new housing opportunities for residents to build units for family members or to rent out; allowing for more efficient use of infrastructure and community services and increasing the supply of rental housing.

The long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic around tenant issues such as rent repayment, Landlord Tenant Board issues, and adequate affordable supply will need to be assessed and addressed through future reports to Council.

There does however remain a need to support those experiencing chronic homelessness with complex needs through permanent supportive housing intervention, which combines housing, intensive case management and clinical health services. This need for additional health resources integrated with housing and wraparound supports has continued to be highlighted locally through the COVID-19 pandemic and will need to continue to be addressed as part of COVID-19 transition planning. The City will need to continue to advocate for and work with senior levels of government to achieve greater integration between health and housing resources and the creation of sustainable supportive housing solutions.

Term of Council Priorities

In January 2020, Council confirmed their priorities for the remainder of this term of Council:

- Climate Change

- Multi-Modal Transportation
- Homelessness & Affordable Housing
- Integrated Growth & Development
- Fiscal Health & Financial Management
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Trust & Confidence in City Government
- A Healthy, Respectful & Supportive Workplace

Social justice issues such as reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the importance of addressing climate change, and the impact of the pandemic on our community, have illustrated these term of Council priorities are more important than ever and will support a fair and equitable recovery for all.

This is supported by information and data presented monthly by the City's Emergency Operations Director at General Issues Committee meetings and the City's Medical Officer of Health at Board of Health meetings, in addition to data included in the [Just Recovery policy paper](#) submitted to Council by the Just Recovery Hamilton Coalition in January 2021. Appendix A to Report CM21003 highlights the relationship between the Just Recovery policy paper, the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery, term of Council priorities and the City's recently approved [Community Safety & Wellbeing Plan](#) (approved by Council June 2021) and will be used as an input into future discussions of the social issues sub-committee of Council.

Going forward, work will continue across all term of Council priorities; however, what can realistically be accomplished over the remainder of the term will depend on resources and staff capacity required to continue to support the emergency response and recovery from the pandemic. Similar to program area recovery work, term of Council priority work impacts will be brought forward as part of the upcoming 2022 – 2025 budget process and through individual reports to Council as required over the coming months.

Economic Recovery

The Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery, formed by City Council to provide multi-sectoral leadership and direction to guide Hamilton's economic recovery, formulated an action driven plan to position the City of Hamilton during, in the aftermath of the pandemic and for the long-term through the integration of three (3) guiding principles. These guiding principles, Climate Action, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Labour, which also align with the Term of Council Priorities and address some of the social impacts of COVID-19 related to business impacts, lost employment and the importance of child care access, will ensure that actions taken to support recovery will not only help build the economy back to its pre-pandemic state, but will look towards ensuring a sustainable and equitable recovery. 53% (as of September 13, 2021) of the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery are considered

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

complete. Up-to-date implementation progress of the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery is available on the Invest in Hamilton [economic recovery task force dashboard](#). An update report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery will be brought forward to Council prior to the end of the year.

The 2021 – 2025 Economic Development Action Plan will be brought forward for Council approval in fall 2021, looking at ways to:

- Maintain and sustain our economy as we collectively navigate the global pandemic;
- Continue to pursue economic growth opportunities based on Hamilton's current economic strengths and momentum and the current and forecasted global landscape; and
- Leverage insights and feedback from our business owners, developers, citizens, anchor institutions and City Council.

This update, which is being created under very different circumstances than its predecessor, is an extension of the 2016 – 2020 plan and incorporates the:

- Growing global awareness of the urgency around global warming and the impacts of climate change;
- Importance of actively championing and pursuing equity, diversity and inclusion within our society; and
- Devastating impacts of the global pandemic on the global population and its economies.

Tourism

A strong tourism sector reflects a strong economy and tourism continues to be one of the sectors hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with an uncertain outlook as a result of continued public health and travel restrictions. Due to the reality of physical distancing requirements, the inability to gather in large groups and the likelihood of fear and stigma of a return to many pre-pandemic activities, the tourism sector is expected to be among the last to recover from the pandemic.

The survival of businesses throughout the tourism ecosystem is at risk without continued government support. Although governments at all levels have taken unprecedented actions to cushion the blow to the tourism sector, collectively, more needs to be done in the months and years ahead. Based on the recommendations put forward by the Mayor's Taskforce for Economic Recovery, key policy priorities from a Hamilton tourism perspective, include:

- supporting tourism businesses to adapt and survive;
- providing clear information to travelers and businesses, and limiting uncertainty (to the extent possible);

- evolving response measures to maintain capacity in the sector and address gaps in supports;
- prioritizing investments in safe and accessible public spaces and tourism related infrastructure;
- promoting domestic tourism and supporting safe return of international tourism;
- restoring traveler confidence.

The 2021-2025 Tourism Strategy, which will focus on how to best support the economic recovery of the local tourism sector while identifying how to best drive a strong economic impact post-COVID-19, will be presented to Council in November 2021.

Partnerships & Collaborations

Throughout the pandemic, different levels of government and community partners also came together in unprecedented ways, removing red tape and barriers to work together in addressing challenges and meeting the needs of local communities. Recovery efforts will look to continue build on these relationships and identify new opportunities to collaborate with the provincial and federal governments and our stakeholders and community partners to build on successes achieved during the pandemic. This includes continuing the partnerships between the City, its health institutions and those responsible for the delivery of many of the City's social programs, to address long term social impacts and recovery.

The Mayors and Chairs from the 11 largest municipal governments across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) continue to meet to discuss COVID-19 impacts, present common issues to the provincial government related to municipal pandemic impacts and present common messages about the need for public health measures and importance of vaccinations. In parallel, the GTHA CAOs/City Managers have been meeting to discuss common issues related to the pandemic emergency response and recovery. There is a recognition that there are many shared regional municipal interests and there are benefits to bringing related staff together to share data, expertise and ideas to inform new approaches and actions on key issues that will advance recovery. Areas of focus are affordable and supportive housing; digital infrastructure; procurement; and sustainable finance. Reports will be brought forward to Council as this collective work advances.

Staff are also in the process of developing an intergovernmental relations strategy that will be brought forward for Council approval. The strategy will assist both Council and senior staff in continuing to build on the relationships between all levels of government established to address change and provide financial support required during the pandemic.

Municipal Financing

Financial pressures for municipalities in 2021 are expected to be fully mitigated through the historic Safe Restart Agreement, Social Services Relief Fund and many other pandemic support funding announcements. Although these funds are expected to support some shortfalls in 2022, longer term impacts on municipal service delivery are unknown and financial impacts will be dependent on the length of the pandemic and continuation of public health restrictions. As potential pandemic scenarios illustrate, it is anticipated that COVID-19 related health risks will continue in the immediate future, with full economic recovery not expected to return to pre-COVID-19 levels till beyond 2022.

With no committed funding from senior levels of government beyond 2022, it is anticipated that the City will continue to face many financial pressures in 2022 and beyond, including the on-going loss of revenue from transit operations and recreation user fees, as well as, increased costs to continue to support emergency response measures and our vulnerable populations.

Information presented to GIC on June 16, 2021 through Report FCS21057, 2022-2024 Multi-Year Outlook and Capital Financing Plan Update, projected additional financial pressures related to COVID-19 in 2022 of \$57.2 M. An updated 2022-2025 Budget Outlook Report will be presented to Council in October 2021.

Return to the workplace and employee mental health and wellbeing

The sustained emergency response has had a significant impact on the City's workforce. As a result of impacts of the pandemic on both our employees professional and personal lives, there was an increase need for mental health resources and supports across all levels of our workforce. Ensuring that City employees are supported in both the short term and long term will be a key to the City's recovery and will set the City up for continued effective and efficient service delivery, while remaining an employer of choice. Returning to the workplace and employee mental health and wellbeing recovery planning is focused around ensuring the City has safe working environments and that our workplace practices continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our workforce.

Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing

Staff at all levels of the organization have experienced anxiety and stress and have required supports to maintain their mental health. This has been evident through the 236% increase in use of the City's LifeSpeak OnDemand series that was accessed by staff 9057 times in 2020 (as referenced in the 2021 City Manager Department budget presentation (February 2021) and in Report CM21006). It is anticipated that the organization will need to continue to provide ongoing support for all employees. This includes mental health and wellbeing supports for:

- frontline staff that will help them stay resilient and manage stress; and
- people leaders to help manage change and recognize when team members are struggling will be critical as we move into the recovery phase.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

As new resources are identified and developed, they will be brought online and made available to all employees. The City's Workplace Mental Health Advisory Committee continue to ensure actions are aligned with our Workplace Mental Health Strategy and our goal to create psychologically healthy and safe workplaces.

Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Verification Policy

To help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in our community, at its meeting of August 26, 2021, Council approved the Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Verification Policy (HUR21008) to protect the health and safety of the City's workforce.

Future Work Models

As we shift the focus from working from home as an emergency response to working from home being a part of the City's formal work model, there is a growing need for guidance on how to support this transition and ensure long term sustainability. These new work models, being presented to the September 22, 2021 General Issues Committee as part of Report HUR21007, are outlined in the Hamilton@Work document. Evolving our work models will ensure the City continues to remain an employer of choice, as other employers move to offer more flexibility through a range of working models.

Return to Workplace Strategy

Identifying when employees working from home since March 2020 can safely return to the workplace (specific dates for returning staff to the workforce is not known at this time), is also a part of the City's recovery planning. The Hamilton@Work document, presented being presented to the September 22, 2021 General Issues Committee as Report PED21181, outlines the return to workplace strategy for the gradual, safe and measured return of City staff to municipal facilities based on three main areas: health & safety; information technology; and facilities.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report CM12003 – Review of Just Recovery Policy Paper Recommendations