



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	July 4, 2022
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Emergency Operations Centre COVID-19 Recovery Phase and After-Action Reporting (CM22010) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Connie Verhaeghe (905) 546-2424 Ext. 6038
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Grace Mater Acting City Manager
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## INFORMATION

This Report provides an overview of the activities that will be undertaken by the Emergency Management Program as part of the recovery phase of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These activities include the after-action debriefing process and plans for preparing an After-Action Report for Council and the public. The After-Action Report includes successes of the response and recommendations for future responses and will be provided to Council in August 2022.

### Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

The City of Hamilton Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated on March 12, 2020 to support the local response to COVID-19. Originally, the EOC was activated at a Level One, however by March 13, 2020 the response was escalated to a Level Two to better respond to the emerging situation. The spread of COVID-19 quickly became a local, provincial, and national emergency due to the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified COVID-19 as a world-wide pandemic. On April 17, 2020, the Mayor of Hamilton declared a State of Emergency in the City of Hamilton. The City responded quickly to the pandemic, working with other levels of government, businesses, health care partners and community organizations.

---

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.

It is a requirement under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMPCA) and its supporting Regulations 380/04 that every municipality have an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and a Municipal Emergency Control Group. The City of Hamilton's Municipal Emergency Control Group is known as the EOC Management Team. This team is comprised of General Managers, Directors and support staff under the direction of the EOC Director. As part of the provincial mandatory compliance to the EMPCA, every member of the EOC Management Team must complete annual mandatory training to ensure they are trained on their response role during an emergency. They must also participate in an annual emergency exercise. The training records and exercise documentation are submitted to the Province's Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management to validate that EOC Management Team members are prepared to respond to an emergency.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hamilton's EOC was last activated in December 2013 for the Ice Storm that resulted in a large power outage during frigid winter temperatures.

### **Emergency Operations Centre COVID-19 Response Overview**

The standard emergency response structure used nationally, provincially and locally is the Incident Management System (IMS). Within days of activating the EOC for COVID-19, the City was operating the largest Incident Management System ever implemented in Hamilton with many sections, functions and task groups working daily.

From the outset of the EOC activation, the following strategic priorities were in place which helped to guide all aspects of decision making within the EOC:

Priority One: Save Lives

Priority Two: Prevent overwhelming Hamilton's healthcare system

Priority Three: Protect the economy so that businesses could recover post COVID-19

The EOC Management Team immediately established a meeting schedule to share situational awareness, determine impacts of the pandemic on City services, and establish a response plan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

While operational needs varied over the course of the pandemic, generally the EOC's efforts focused on:

- Providing strategic and tactical direction for the overall response and for secondary impacts/events/consequences
- Responding to provincial orders such as closing public spaces (e.g. recreation centres, arenas) and limiting capacity in designated premises
- Arranging for the procurement of essential resources such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

---

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.

- Ensuring logistical support by coordinating staff redeployments to support critical needs
- Ensuring the continued operations of critical City services
- Developing and implementing internal policies and procedures for City staff and City services with respect to public health measures
- Attending to media and public information needs

### **Incident Action Planning**

One of the foundational elements of the Incident Management System is the Incident Action Planning Cycle. The Incident Action Plan Cycle is a process whereby the EOC Management Team receives a situational update from the lead response organization on the emergency. Once the current situation is understood, the EOC Management Team develops response priorities or objectives. These priorities or objectives are recorded on an EOC Action Plan. The EOC Action Plan also defines tasks to be completed by members of the EOC Management team and their Section and/or Unit leads. As these tasks are completed, the team responsible for the tasks will report back to the EOC Management Team stating the action was completed hence removing it from the EOC Action Plan.

During the response to COVID-19, situational awareness was provided by different section leads. Public Health Services provided the situational update by reporting on COVID cases, outbreaks, vaccine uptake and legislated public health measures. Legal Services provided an update on changes to the provincial regulations under the EMPCA and the *Reopening Ontario Act*. The Operations Team provided an update on changes to City services and measures to ensure a safe workplace. At the end of each EOC Management Team meeting, the Communications Team would provide an update on the communication needs for Council, the media, the public and City employees. All decisions made by the EOC Management Team were made with the information available at the time. Decision making was a process of gathering information, assessing alternative solutions and evaluating the implementation of each decision on the health and safety of the public and City staff. All decisions made by the Management Team were recorded in a Decision Log.

As of the time of this report, the EOC held 269 Management Team meetings, and recorded 734 decisions in the EOC Decision Log.

### **Recovery Strategy and After-Action Report**

Emergency management can be considered as recurring events with four phases: Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. After two years in a COVID-19 Response phase, the EOC Management Team is now in the 'Recovery' phase. This

phase is the restoration of services, the rebuilding of resources and partnerships and the process of implementing new strategies to effectively recover from the pandemic.

As part of the Recovery phase, and before a potential 7<sup>th</sup> wave, it's important to do an evaluation of our response now. A thorough debrief process will be initiated by the City's Emergency Managers. An after-action review will be conducted in order to document what happened and, where appropriate, present recommendations to Council with respect to the City's emergency response and any recommended improvements for future emergency responses. The after-action reviews will focus on the response and outcomes of the response. A debrief session will be held with members of the EOC Management Team and the Operations Team. Surveys will be sent to unit leads of the IMS structure and key informant interviews will be conducted with the Mayor and Members of Council. Following the debrief and collation of all data, an After-Action Report will be written and will be shared with Council, with the public, and with the province. The focus of the After-Action Report is the successes of the response and areas for improvements. Areas requiring improvement are highlighted and corrective action are determined. The goal is to reflect and learn from the response in order to build a better more effective response in the future.

#### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

None