

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Date	Monday, March 1, 2021
Subject	Managing impacts of COVID-19 update 7

Recommendation

That report “Managing the Impacts of COVID-19: Update 7” dated March 1, 2021 be forwarded to the local Member of Parliament and Member of Provincial Parliament, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities Ontario, Ontario Big City Mayors and the Federal Minister of Finance and the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Minister of Finance for the Province of Ontario.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report outlines the City of Guelph’s work managing the impacts of COVID-19 since staff’s last update to Council on December 7, 2020.

Key Findings

The City continues working with its partners on Guelph’s Emergency Operations Control Group (EOCG) to respond to and recover from a second, more severe wave of COVID-19.

Based on increasing cases throughout Ontario, the provincial government paused its COVID-19 response framework (colour-coded zones), declared a second state of emergency, instituted a province-wide shut-down, and issued a stay-at-home order from December 26, 2020 to February 16, 2021.

Thanks to the technology and health and safety measures put in place during the first wave, the City maintained all essential services without disruption, and continues delivering many programs and services online.

The most notable disruption to City services was the closure of recreation facilities, theatres and museums, and reduced in-person services at all City facilities.

Guelph consulted Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) before reopening facilities or resuming programs based on permitted activities outlined in [Ontario’s revised COVID-19 response framework](#) as of February 16.

Since the last COVID-19 update to City Council, Guelph’s EOCG has convened a vaccine rollout working table to ensure provincial and local agencies are aligned and prepared as additional vaccine supplies become available. The working table is led by Public Health with support from Guelph Family Health Team and the City to

ensure community-wide collaboration and coordination of facilities, staff, training, administration and communication.

Internally, we formed a vaccination clinic operational task force including staff from Operations, Transit, Engineering, Communications and Guelph Police Services so that we can provide municipal support from Guelph's mass vaccination clinics.

Another working table led by City staff from Economic Development and Tourism is focused on getting people back to work. The table includes partners and representatives from the Guelph Chamber of Commerce and University of Guelph to provide information and support for local businesses as provincial restrictions begin to ease.

Financial Implications

The most current financial implications available for COVID-19 are found in the [Third Quarter Operating Variance Report](#) which, in summary, included an estimated \$19.5 million shortfall in revenue; a cost increase for COVID-19 expenses of \$4.8 million; and a corresponding cost reduction through mitigation efforts of \$20.7 million.

There have been several positive provincial funding announcements related to COVID-19 since December including:

- Phase 2 Safe Restart Operating Stream 2021 allocation - \$1.4 million
- Phase 2 Safe Restart Transit Stream 2021 allocation – up to \$10.2 million
- Ministry of Health and Long-term Care 2020 Paramedic Services COVID relief funding - \$879,202
- COVID-19 Resilience Local Government Infrastructure Stream - \$945,162 (awaiting project approval from province)

Unfortunately, the Ontario Ministry of Education has unexpectedly reduced funding for childcare services by \$3.5 million. This means the City now owes \$1.45 million for its share of 2020 childcare services provided by the County of Wellington. The City is working with the County to support further provincial conversations regarding this late funding decision. The City was unaware of this reduced funding and the resultant financial obligation, and may have qualified for further provincial COVID-19 stimulus funding had an application been submitted within the prescribed timeframe.

Staff are working on year-end financial accounting processes and will provide final 2020 COVID-19 impact figures as part of the year-end budget monitoring report in May 2021.

Report

Supporting the community

Based on increasing cases throughout Ontario, the Provincial government paused its COVID-19 response framework (colour-coded zones), declared a second state of emergency, instituted a province-wide shut-down, and issued a stay-at-home order on December 26, 2020. The emergency declaration ended as scheduled on February 9, and the Stay-at-home orders for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health were extended until February 16.

Health officials believe the province-wide shut down helped slow the spread of COVID-19 and recognize the negative impacts provincial restrictions have had on small businesses, Ontario's economy, and people's mental health.

Local and provincial case numbers reached an all-time high in January, and now infection rates appear to be slowing down. Since December, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health has seen the greatest reduction in cases among local health units across the province, and Ontario's second wave of COVID-19 has started to decline.

In-class learning has resumed at all elementary and secondary schools in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph, in support of families' and children's physical and mental health, development and overall well-being.

The provincial government is also expanding support programs for people and businesses to mitigate those impacts.

- [COVID-19 Provincial support for people](#)
- [COVID-19 Provincial support for business](#)

Vaccine rollout

We've had some early success on the vaccine front. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health was the first local public health unit in Ontario to receive and administer COVID-19 vaccinations.

Several members of Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service are already supporting the rollout; administering vaccinations at long-term-care facilities. At the request of Public Health, we will continue to provide support to vaccination clinics where our staffing resources permit.

Every long-term-care resident in Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph has received the first of two required doses, and second doses are scheduled to be complete by the end of February. About half of long-term-care workers in the region have received their first dose as well.

However, Canadian supplies of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been disrupted. Canada has fallen behind other developed nations in the number of vaccinations administered per capita. Health Canada regulators are expected to approve another vaccine from AstraZeneca but it is still unclear how many doses would be delivered in the coming weeks.

WDGPH will supervise all vaccination clinics in accordance with [Ontario's ethical framework for COVID-19 vaccine distribution](#). All appointments will be administered and scheduled by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, and all clinics will prioritize vaccination using the same framework.

As people become eligible for the vaccine, they can register online or by phone.

As more vaccine supplies become available, Public Health will contact registered patients to schedule appointments.

In addition to pop-up vaccination clinics throughout the region, five mass vaccination clinics are preparing to open to the community at large:

- University of Guelph – administered by Guelph Family Health Team
- Linamar – Woodlawn Road location
- Fergus Multi-plex

- Orangeville arena
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health main office – Chancellor’s Way

The first mass vaccination clinic opened on Friday, February 19 at the Fergus Multiplex, where Guelph-Wellington Paramedics Services staff helped vaccinate essential caregivers from long-term care facilities. When vaccine supplies become available, it will open to the public.

Learn more about the vaccine rollout at wdgpublichealth.ca/vaccine

Guelph’s EOCG is well-prepared to deliver on Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health’s vaccination plan as soon as supplies become available. The group has established a working table specific to the vaccine rollout with members of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health and Guelph Family Health Team. The role of the working table is to ensure we make the most of the resources, skills and talent our entire community has to offer, and provide community-wide coordination of facilities, logistic support, traffic and transportation services, staff, training, administration and communication.

Additionally, the City formed an internal vaccination clinic operational task force to support Guelph’s vaccination clinics. This task force includes staff from Operations, Transit, Engineering, Corporate Communications, and Guelph Police Services, as well as our Community Emergency Management Coordinator. The group is meeting regularly to determine how best to manage traffic flow, temporary structures that may be required, transit access, communications support and/or any other request of the municipality.

Variants

Health officials also remind us the virus is evolving and mutating. We’re learning more about COVID-19 variants detected in the UK, South Africa, Brazil and Nigeria. Data collected so far suggests that variants are more contagious. Health officials also warn that variants could be resistant to current COVID-19 vaccines.

In addition to Federal travel restrictions, the [Province of Ontario launched a six-point plan to combat COVID-19 variants](#):

- mandatory on-arrival testing of international travellers,
- enhanced screening and sequencing to identify the new variants,
- maintaining public health measures to keep people safe,
- strengthening case and contact management to track the spread of new cases,
- enhanced protections for vulnerable populations, and
- leveraging the latest data to inform public health decisions.

Vital Focus - Secondary Pandemic Effects

The [Vital Focus series](#) of reports being prepared by Toward Common Ground ([a collaboration of social and health system partners](#) including the City) continue to build awareness of the secondary impacts of the pandemic using evidence-based analysis to provide recommendations that can help mitigate those effects.

The data and recommendations presented in the Vital Focus series are starting to shape strategic decision making, community measurement, and advocacy efforts.

Since the last Council COVID-19 Update report in December 2020, two new reports have been published, and [the partnership is preparing to release two more](#); Vital

Focus reports on People with Disabilities, and Access to the Internet and Digital Devices. All available reports are included below:

- [Food Insecurity\(Previously available\)](#)
- [Alcohol and Substance Use \(Previously available\)](#)
- [Mental Health \(Previously available\)](#)
- [Employment \(new\)](#)
- [Families and Children \(new\)](#)
- People with Disabilities (forthcoming)
- Access to the Internet and Digital Devices (forthcoming)

The reports demonstrate several important realities:

- While the pandemic hasn't created the secondary impacts being felt in the community, COVID-19 has exacerbated and made pressing issues more visible and acute.
- The pandemic has heightened pre-existing inequities. Black, Indigenous, low-income, people with disabilities and older adult communities are among those who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- Secondary impacts of the pandemic layer or compound—they are not often felt in isolation; for example, impacts to employment can at times lead to mental health impacts or increased food insecurity.

In order to turn Vital Focus data and insight into an impetus for strategic city-wide action, Toward Common Ground and its member organizations are hosting a summit expected to take place in the spring of 2021. The summit is using Guelph's Community Plan as an organizing structure to build from and is being designed to:

- develop clarity and agreement on our community's most pressing issues,
- determine potential solutions, key programs or initiatives that could act as levers for lasting change, and
- identify critical data measures to monitor community response to the pandemic and Guelph's resilience to withstand future challenges.

Educating the community about regulations and guidelines

In addition to the [Holiday video message](#) from the City's EOCG, the City shares provincial regulations and public health guidelines through media interviews with print, radio and television news outlets, the City's website and social media channels, signs, posters and paid advertising on Guelph Transit, print, web, social media and radio.

We're also collaborating with Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health to help develop and support a community-wide multi-media communications plan for the vaccine rollout.

Enforcing Ontario's Emergency and Stay-at-home Orders

In response to updated provincial emergency and stay-at-home orders, the City, Guelph Police Services and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health issued a joint statement reassuring people we would not enter homes, or randomly stop people out driving and walking, but would issue charges and fines when appropriate.

Guelph's Bylaw team has been the City's main point of contact for questions and concerns about COVID-19 restrictions, rules and regulations. The team is

considering adding administrative resources to answer inquiries, so more officers can be available to respond to concerns in the field.

Guelph participated in a multi-ministry inspection and enforcement campaign in February and continues proactive enforcement of COVID-19 guidelines at large retailers and on Guelph Transit.

Guelph Police Services, Bylaw and University of Guelph Campus Police now report COVID-19 related charges and fines on the City’s website guelph.ca/covid19.

Table: charges laid under the Reopening Ontario Act (January to February 16)

Agency	Gatherings with charges	Person fail to comply \$750	Person obstruction \$1000	Complaints about businesses	Business fail to comply \$750
Police and Bylaw	6	21	4	31	4
Campus Police	11	48	0	n/a	n/a
Total Fines	n/a	\$60,720	\$4,520	n/a	\$3,520

Set fines under the Reopening Ontario Act

- Failure to comply with the Act could result in a \$750 fine.
- Obstructing anyone from performing an activity under the Act could result in a fine of \$1,000.
- Obstructing anyone from performing their duty could result in a \$10,000 fine.
- \$130 administration fee applies to all fines.

City services during the second wave

While Guelph’s recreation facilities, museums and theatres were closed during shut down, new technology, online services and health and safety measures implemented during the first wave helped minimize disruption to other City programs and services during the second wave:

- City Council and committee meeting schedule was uninterrupted
- City Hall, Provincial Offences Court maintained some in-person services
- Guelph Farmers Market remained open
- Guelph Public Library maintained online programming and curbside pickup
- Guelph Museums and tourism and ran several virtual experiences
- Building permits and inspections for essential construction projects continued
- Waste drop-off remained open

Local recreation, entertainment and attractions

Trails - The City continues encouraging people to enjoy safe outdoor attractions and recreation activities. Guelph maintains several winter trails and has improved parking and access to those trails this season.

Outdoor skating - while other cities closed outdoor rinks during the province-wide shutdown, Guelph's popular skate trail in Riverside Park remained open, and community volunteers maintained skating rinks in parks all over the city. Up to 25 people are allowed on each rink and skaters must wear masks. To discourage gatherings and games, hockey equipment was not allowed during shutdown.

Now, while provincial regulations still prohibit team practices and games, casual play using hockey sticks, pucks and low pond-style nets provided by the City is permitted.

Every winter, to reduce the risk of injury, the City prohibits the use of full-sized nets on community rinks and does not allow any skating on storm ponds.

Market Square skating rink is open for 25 skaters at a time. 45-minute sessions start on the hour between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Winter Woodland Theatre and contest - [The Downtown Theatre Project](#), [Royal City Musical Productions Inc.](#), and [Guelph Little Theatre](#) have teamed up with the City of Guelph to [animate the Riverside Park Skate Trail](#) with painted scenes from popular stage productions using life-sized snow people. Visitors are invited to try and guess the scenes and can enter their answers into an online form for a chance to win one of five theatre prize packs valued at \$860.

Glow Guelph – at the covered bridge is a fun, safe outdoor destination. The seasonal animated lighting displays continue daily from dusk until 11 p.m. People share their #GlowGuelph photos on social media drawing more local visitors.

Regional Recovery and Relief Fund - Tourism Services was awarded \$100,901 for several projects that encourage local tourism as a key part of Guelph's economic recovery.

Since the City's last update, funding was used for projects and marketing initiatives to encourage and strengthen Guelph as a destination for locals including:

- Revitalizing [The Walkway](#)
- Work with [the Guelph Box](#) to offer a Visit Guelph Box featuring goods from Guelph tourism businesses
- Launch of [exploreguelph.ca](#)
- Video content encouraging Guelphites to be visitors in their own backyards (safely)

Staycation Campaign – the City is launching a contest for Guelph residents to encourage overnight stays in Guelph, and local shopping and dining. The contest is planned for Q1 2021.

Tourism Recovery Initiative - In conjunction with the City's Community Relief Fund, the City will offer \$350,000 in funding for Guelph tourism operators and partners with three opportunities for funding:

- Physical destination development,
- Digital communication, and
- Emergency business operating expense relief.

The City is working with stakeholders and partners to refine selection criteria and will begin accepting applications in April.

Supporting Guelph's workforce

The City is working on several projects in response to December 2020's Labour Force Survey Update:

Scenario Planning: working with [Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin](#) to identify key factors and external forces impacting workforce development to address regional challenges and opportunities that may arise from the pandemic restart and recovery phases.

[Findyourjob.ca](#) launched in May 2020 and we continue promoting it to local employers and job seekers. Since our last update to Council, the City participated in three [virtual job fairs](#), and at the time of writing this report, are scheduled for another on March 3, 2021.

[Guelph Arts Apprenticeship Program](#) – Guelph businesses receive a maximum grant of \$4,000 per month for the first four months of the apprenticeship (totaling a maximum of \$16,000 per position) when hiring a University of Guelph College of Arts graduate.

[Cooperative Education Session](#) – February 2 – sponsored panel from Conestoga College, University of Guelph, Upper Grand District School Board and Innovation Guelph for a discussion on co-op student hiring.

The City also sits on the board of the Career Education Council focused on youth employment retention and now has additional resources to support local business retention and expansion. Part of this work will focus on workforce development programming and partnerships within the region and how we can better leverage workforce programming to support local businesses.

Ongoing partnerships and collaboration

The City's economic development division continues to work with the Smart Cities Office, the Small Business Enterprise Centre, Innovation Guelph, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Guelph Business Association and many others to ensure that local agencies are aligned and providing the best support we can.

Another working table led by City staff from Economic Development and Tourism is focused on getting people back to work. The table includes partners and representatives from the Guelph Chamber of Commerce and University of Guelph to provide information and support for local businesses as provincial restrictions begin to ease.

Restaurant round table –The City partnered with the Chamber of Commerce to hold a virtual round table with local restauranteurs in December to further understand the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on this sector. Present was Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and Dr. Nicola Mercer. Follow up advocacy correspondence was sent to Mr. Sarkaria jointly from the City and the Chamber of Commerce.

Guelph Shops–The City increased print and online advertising to encourage people to shop local this holiday season. Since then, we've received \$12,000 for Community Collaboration Funding through Innovation Guelph as part of the Digital Main Street program. The funding allows us to develop video content featuring several local businesses to be used in ongoing promotion for [guelphshops.ca](#).

Seasonal Patio Program engagement – Completed business, patron and visitor engagement to inform plans for seasonal patio program in 2021.

Mind Your Business Special Bulletins - Email updates to roughly 6,000 business contacts on pandemic-related business news and business support programs.

Business Confidence Survey assistance – The City helped promote Ontario Chamber of Commerce Business Confidence Surveys to measure confidence in the business climate and business recovery from the pandemic. Guelph-made data visualizations were used to inform the annual [Ontario Economic Report](#).

Our Food Future – Grow back better

In December 2020, Our Food Future released [Cultivating community and connection](#). It is the first in a series of annual updates that has been prepared for our funding partners, political leaders, national and local stakeholders, and the public. The booklet reintroduces our vision and goals, shares stories and provides updates on Our Food Future's response to COVID-19, our nine pathfinder projects and numerous living lab initiatives.

Since the last report, Our Food Future matched another \$15,830 in community donations through 10C's Harvest Impact, bringing the total amount raised to \$71,660. This program will continue into 2021, further boosting the momentum of the region's not-for-profit collaborator organizations.

Also since December the SEED's Emergency Food Home Delivery program delivered 35,678 boxes of groceries and meals to 1,100 households most affected by COVID-19. Staff are grateful for the work of 247 volunteers who have contributed an additional 3,879 hours preparing meals, packing groceries, and delivering to households.

On February 12, the [Guelph-Wellington Urban Agriculture Challenge](#) awards were announced, providing a total of \$106,000 to ten projects that will support circular economic recovery and accelerate food production. In addition to the original funding of \$102,000, additional funds were secured to support projects with the potential to make a significant impact for BIPOC communities. These two awards totaling \$4,000 were presented as part of the new "Leveling the Ground" fund.

As part of Grow Back Better, we launched a Food System Resiliency Table (FSRT). As a task force of the Community Steering Table, the FSRT will provide actionable, on-the-ground insights and support to ensure the strength and sustainability of our regional food systems during the current crisis and better equip our food system of the future. The table is establishing Terms of Reference, and will host its first public meeting this spring.

Learn more about [Our Food Future's Grow Back Better Plan](#) and the stories.

In early 2020, Our Food Future and Solid Waste Services used the Civic Accelerator model to issue an innovation challenge; using artificial intelligence to gather data on avoidable/unavoidable food waste collected through the residential organics stream. We're finalizing the contract and expect to announce the winning proposal soon. We are also in discussions with a Toronto-based startup for an in-home data collection pilot for residential food waste which could supplement the truck-based project.

Our Food Future is developing a new business-to-business marketplace, ReSource Exchange, for food waste and by/co-products that would otherwise go to landfill. The platform will be supported by a suite of programs that facilitate business matching, the development of new collaborations, and innovation challenges using materials listed on the exchange. We are aiming to launch ReSource Exchange in March 2020.

Grow Back Better programs will continue through 2021 as we continue to support the City and County's response to COVID-19 alongside the development of Canada's first circular food economy.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Smart Cities Office and [Our Food Future](#) collaborators have been implementing programs and initiatives that address critical issues in the food system. Through [Grow Back Better](#), Our Food Future's 10-point plan in response to COVID-19, we have leveraged \$1.6 million of funding to directly support food access and economic recovery for food businesses.

Emergency Grant Funding

City Council approved \$350,000 for COVID-19 Emergency Grants in 2021. In addition to Guelph Community Grant Program which support not-for-profit organizations in the work they do to improve the quality of life of Guelph residents, two rounds of COVID-19 Emergency Grants will be awarded to not-for-profit organizations, unincorporated groups and individuals to adapt services or programs or strengthen capacity in response to COVID-19. Awarding grants in spring and fall allows the City to respond to changing community needs as the situation evolves.

Support for vulnerable populations

The County of Wellington continues leading our community's efforts to support Guelph's homeless and vulnerable populations. The County offers emergency shelter and housing support services for people in Guelph and Wellington County.

[More specific information about housing and support is available on the County of Wellington website](#)

When the Evergreen Seniors Community Centre closed last March, the City launched a temporary food program for seniors to use up the food left in the kitchen. The program now delivers 900 meals a week to local seniors, neighbourhood groups and emergency shelters. The Evergreen meal program has enough funding to continue until the end of this month.

Supporting the organization

Since the start of the pandemic Guelph Police Services has had a total of 11 employees test positive for COVID-19. Five of those cases were related to a workplace outbreak January 2 to 15, 2021.

Another 10 cases of COVID-19 have been reported across other City departments. Thankfully, all employees have recovered, the City's COVID-19 response measures prevented the virus from spreading further, and there was little to no disruption to community services.

We expected and prepared for many more employees to fall ill during the first and second waves. That hasn't happened, and we're working to ensure it doesn't.

We're refining COVID-19 screening for employees and visitors as we reopen facilities and resume City programs and services.

The City also invested in additional mental health support and resources for all employees. Now, the City offers more resources for more types of treatment, and we're reminding employees that mental health is health – keeping employees healthy and safe is the City's priority.

Intergovernmental Advocacy

Since the last COVID-19 report, the City has been implementing its advocacy plan for 2021, which emphasizes Guelph's economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

This work includes the Mayor's participation in a provincial pre-budget consultation session with Minister of Finance the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy on February 11, 2021. On behalf of the City, Mayor Guthrie called on the province to partner with the federal government to prioritize emergency operating and transit relief funding for municipal governments in 2021 through a Safe Restart Agreement 2.0. The City also called on the province to stimulate economic recovery in Guelph by supporting local businesses and by investing in job-creating municipal infrastructure projects. These key asks were repeated in both the City's federal and provincial pre-budget consultation written submissions.

In addition to our individual advocacy efforts, Guelph continues to engage with other municipalities to support a consistent message from Ontario's municipalities, The Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM).

When meeting on Friday, January 15 and on Friday, February 19 the City engaged with other municipalities to ensure a consistent message to the province from Ontario's large urban local governments. The January 15 meeting was leveraged to pass a motion calling on the provincial and federal governments to work together to identify funding to help municipalities address budget shortfalls in 2021. OBCM also passed motions on municipal involvement in mass vaccination planning and on securing enhanced sick pay for workers to help address the spread of COVID-19. On February 19, OBCM received an update from (former) General Hillier on the province's vaccination process. OBCM also discussed its pre-budget consultation submission, its planned advocacy in 2021 which will focus on economic recovery, municipal fiscal issues, climate change and mental health and addictions, and received updates from both the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Both associations continue to advocate for emergency operating and transit relief funding for 2021 and beyond and for additional infrastructure dollars for transit and other municipal capital projects to advance recovery. AMO is also engaging with the province on joint and several liability given an increase in insurance costs for municipal governments province wide.

Further to this work, the City is working with community leaders and stakeholders to implement [community-based advocacy](#). Like the City's corporate-specific advocacy priorities, this year's focus for community-based advocacy is on our community's economic and social recovery as well as climate change. Staff are working with key partners to identify advocacy asks to stimulate local recovery to take to the provincial and federal government later this winter.

Financial Implications

As part of the most recent quarterly financial update, [Third Quarter Operating Variance Report](#), the projected year-end position for 2020 included an estimated \$19.5 million shortfall in revenue related to COVID-19 impacts; a cost increase for COVID-19 expenses of \$4.8 million; and a corresponding cost reduction through mitigation efforts of \$20.7 million. Staff are preparing year-end financial reports and will provide final 2020 figures in the year-end budget monitoring report in May 2021.

Safe Restart Grants and other COVID-related funding announcements

As previously reported, the City was awarded \$6.9 million in Phase 1 Safe Restart operating funding in 2020. In December, it was announced that the City will receive an additional \$1.4 million as part of Phase 2 in 2021. This was unexpected given previous communication regarding the Phase 2 program. The City certainly appreciates this distribution from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as it will help to offset expected long-term financial impacts of COVID-19.

Further, the Phase 2 Transit Stream of the Safe Restart Grant program administered by the Ministry of Transportation was announced in December. If the application is successful, the City could receive up to \$10.2 million based on actual losses in transit revenue as of March 31, 2021. This is in addition to the \$5.1 million received for transit services as part of Phase 1.

In January, the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care confirmed COVID-related grant funding for the Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Services of \$879,202. This will be shared proportionately with the County of Wellington and will offset previously anticipated operating losses.

Unfortunately, the City was made aware in February through the County as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Child Care Services, that the Ministry of Education has made an unexpected one-time reduction to 2020 operating grant funding totaling \$3.5 million. As a result of this, it is now estimated that the City will be required to fund our proportionate share of this loss totaling \$1.45 million that was not included in previous Council reporting. The City was unaware of this reduced funding and the resultant financial obligation, and may have qualified for further provincial COVID-19 stimulus funding had an application been submitted within the prescribed timeframe.

Further investigation and consultation with the province is expected on this developing situation.

The City continues to advocate, monitor and apply for COVID-related funding opportunities including the [COVID-19 Resilience Local Government Infrastructure Stream](#). The City was allocated \$945,162 through this grant stream and staff are awaiting a response on this project application process.

Recently, the federal government announced of a Permanent Public Transit Fund valued at \$3 Billion annually beginning in 2026. An additional \$6 Billion will be made available to transit systems Canada-wide in the short-term on a project by project basis to support recovery. At the time of writing, the City is researching project eligibility.

As well, the Federal Healthy Communities Initiative launched on February 9, 2021. This funding opportunity is part of the federal response to COVID-19 and seeks to fund community-oriented projects focused on digital solutions, enhanced mobility and safe and vibrant community spaces. At the time of writing, staff are exploring potential projects that fit eligibility requirements.

Consultations

This report was written in consultation with general managers, strategic business advisors, and the executive team.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The content of this report aligns with the Strategic Plan, Guelph. Future Ready. The City's response to COVID-19 is aligned with each of the priority areas of the Strategic Plan. That work is in support of our community and our employees during the pandemic and through recovery, while not losing sight of long-term sustainability.

Attachments

None.

Departmental Approval

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