

<b>POLICY #:</b>	<b>PS 008</b>	<b>POLICY TITLE:</b>	<b>Pandemic Plan</b>
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<b>APPROVAL DATE AND MOTION:</b>	March 31, 2020 (2020-03-27)	<b>CROSS-REFERENCE:</b>	
<b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b>	Director of Emergency Management	<b>APPENDICES:</b>	
<b>APPROVER:</b>	Council	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	March 31, 2020
<b>REVISION DATE(S)/ MOTION #</b>	February 28, 2023 (2023-02-64)	<b>NEXT REVIEW DATE:</b>	Q1 2028

## 1. DEFINITIONS (Provide definitions of the key terms used within the Policy).

- a. Alberta Health: Under the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, sets healthcare legislation and policy. Alberta's coordinating provincial authority for pandemic planning, response, and recovery.
- b. Alberta Health Services (AHS): Implements and provides healthcare services and programs including actions in response to a pandemic.
- c. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO): Is the municipal employee responsible for the administration and operation of the County of Vermilion River and a link to the elected officials.
- d. County of Vermilion River (CVR): The municipal County as defined under the Municipal Government Act.
- e. Chief Medical Officer of Health – Alberta (CMOH): work with focus on the health of the population, reports the health status of the population, controls and manages infectious and communicable diseases, gives direction to Environmental Public Health (EPH) service programs, and to chronic disease and injury prevention.
- f. Director of Emergency Management (DEM): Is the County of Vermilion River employee, or their designate deputies, that is tasked with the prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery of the County services during an emergency.
- g. Essential Services: are those services provided to the public that affect the health and safety if not provided. This may include work provided

- by; water/sewer, gas utilities, public work and road maintenance crews, protective services and office staff as deemed so by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).
- h. Executive Staff: Comprises the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Directors, Managers with consultation with the Reeve and Council (where appropriate).
  - i. Health Canada: During a pandemic, Health Canada is responsible for the approval and distribution of vaccines.
  - j. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): For the purpose of a pandemic, this equipment shall include; surgical or filtered mask, glasses or shields, gowns, and latex gloves.
  - k. Provincial Operations Centre (POC): Is the 24/7 command and control centre manned by Alberta Emergency Management Agents who monitor potential and existing threats to the Province of Alberta.
  - l. Public Health Authority of Canada (PHAC): Federal agency responsible for co-ordinating responses to national health emergencies and liaising with international partners.
  - m. Public Health Emergency: Is a declaration made by the Provincial Government, under the *Public Health Act* or *Emergency Management Act*, to make an order without consultation, suspend or modify the application or operation of all or part of an enactment for which that Minister is responsible subject to the terms and conditions that Minister may prescribe if the Minister is satisfied that its application or operation may directly or indirectly unreasonably hinder or delay action required in order to protect the public health.
  - n. World Health Organization (WHO): Is the international agency that monitors outbreaks on a global scale and co-ordinates international notification and responses.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy will establish guidelines as it pertains to the continuity of municipal government, through prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery steps.

## 3. OBJECTIVE (Summarize the desired effect of outcome of the policy)

- a. Preparation Phase: The time before or directly leading up to a declaration of Public Health Emergency, in which the County of

Vermilion River will begin planning to safeguard employees in relation to the specific threat identified:

- i. Identification of Threat: The CVR Emergency Management Team will monitor any emerging pandemic threats on a regular basis through the Provincial Operations Centre (POC).
  - ii. Notification: Since various influenza strains act differently, formal notification of a pandemic will come from the Alberta Health, once that it received, the CVR will begin collecting information relating to; communication, sanitation, isolation, and other potential directions to combat the spread of the disease.
  - iii. Stockpiling: The CVR will maintain a sizeable stockpile of pandemic supplies, enough for each employee for approximately 90 days. This stockpile will be added to, if possible, during the lead up to a pandemic declaration.
  - iv. Self-Examination of Resources: Up to and including the announcement of a Public Health Emergency, the CVR Chief Administration Officer (CAO), the Director of Emergency Management (DEM) and the Directors, should begin to identify employees that are; critical to business operations, can work from home or alternate locations, discuss the possibility of a “rotational work schedule”, and be prepared to restrict access to facilities, meetings and in-person activities.
- b. Mitigation Phase: Occurs within a set time frame (usually 24 to 72 hours) after the notification of a Public Health Emergency from the Province. During this phase, the CVR will begin adjusting response plans against the specific influenza strain causing the pandemic.
- i. Sanitation: Direction will be given to employees as it relates to cleanliness at the office. This may include, depending on the strain, reminders on; handwashing, use of virucidal wipes on common touch areas, use of hand sanitizer, masking, social distancing, air sprays, or other measures provided by Alberta Health to combat the spread of the disease in the workplace.
  - ii. Distribution of Stockpiles: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that has been stockpiled, will be made available to employees. Hand sanitization stations will be set up, direction on masking will be communicated, eye protection (if required) will be made available and physical barriers (such as plexiglass) will be erected depending on the risk presented.

- iii. Communication: Employees will be directed on the need of current measures, re-assured as it pertains to workplace protocols and reminded about any measures being put into place by the CVR. This could be the time, in consultation with Executive staff, that discussions should be had relating to office closure/restrictions, alternate workplace accommodations. Lastly, staff should be briefed with the most current information possible, about the isolation procedures from AHS as well as any compensation models the CVR is enacting during the pandemic.
  - iv. Transition: This is the timeline in which the workplace transitions from a non-pandemic state to a restrictive state of operations designed to ensure business continuity. This could include; moving meetings to virtual platforms, restricting access from the public, implementing office protocols such as masking, social distancing, sick leave. By the end of this step, the CVR would be considered to be in a “state of emergency”.
  - v. Restrictions: Lessons from COVID19 dictated that any direction to restrict or close the administrative function of the CVR office, including in-person Council, should be made by the Chief Administrative Officer with consultation from Council. In the event that directives come directly from Alberta Health, then this step should be discussed with all staff and decisions made regarding critical operations, scheduling, and ratepayer requirements.
- c. Response Phase: last the duration of the pandemic and is, by far, the longest of the phases timewise. This phase focuses on how the CVR will adapt to a changing and uncertain environment, react to events, and replenish itself to ensure business continues as uninterrupted as possible.
- i. Re-assessment: The CVR will continually monitor and brief staff as it pertains to official direction from Alberta Health. If a directive is released from Alberta Health, it'll be brought before the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for actioning. During the COVID19 pandemic, examples of directives included; masking mandates, mandatory vaccinations, use of Peace Officers for enforcement, mandatory work from home orders, etc.
  - ii. Reaction: The CVR will react to any directive, or guidelines from Alberta Health and/or the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) through the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

- iii. Monitoring: The Director of Emergency Management (DEM) or their designate(s), will be the point of contact for monitoring and tracking changes, directives, and recommendations from any public health agency, including; Alberta Health, Public Health Canada, the World Health Organization, etc. They will be responsible for ensuring that the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is fully briefed on any developments that may have an impact on the CVR operations.
- iv. Department Responses: Each individual department should be ready to make recommendations to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) as it relate to how each employee category can best safeguard themselves during the course of the pandemic. Actionable items, such as grader operators working alone in a cab, or cancellation of “stand-up meetings” by staff, should be presented. This step may be repeated several times as the pandemic severity dictates increased response levels.
- v. Emergency Services: Due to the nature of the Fire Service Division, regulations relating to responses, such as medical calls, will be evaluated by the County Fire Chief in consultation with the District Fire Chiefs. Recommendations and guidelines will be implemented accordingly to protect first responders and ensure response guidelines can be met. If a Level of Service under the Fire Bylaw, is affected, then notification must be made to the appropriate dispatch, administrative and operational agencies. Efforts will be made with the District Fire Chiefs to minimize cross-contamination amongst firefighters to prevent one exposure from temporarily closing a station. Firefighters will be encouraged to sanitize the interior surfaces of fire apparatus, medical equipment and wear filtered mask when responding to medical related calls.
- vi. Peace Officers: As an “authorized employer” the CVR must follow the Solicitor General direction as it pertains to the use of Peace Officers during a state of emergency. If CVR Peace Officers are granted additional powers under the *Public Health Act*, as seen during COVID19, a briefing will be sent to the Chief Administrative Officer advising of the changes and how they are to be implemented, duration and compensation (if any) by the Manager of Public Safety through the Director of Protective Services.

- vii. Re-stocking: As the pandemic moves through several stages, it will be imperative that the CVR begin re-stocking personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies. This may be done through the Provincial Stockpile but may require the CVR to investigate 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers. Items such as; rapid test, mask, wipes, etc. grew in short supply as the pandemic peaked in 2021. The CVR should be ready to manage this suspected shortfall by securing supply lines early in the response phase.
- d. Recovery Phase: begins after the formal announcement of the end of the Public Health Emergency. This phase consist of how the CVR will move towards a “post-pandemic” state and set out re-opening and returning protocols for employees, staff, ratepayers, and Council.
  - i. Termination: Once notified that the Public Health Emergency has ended, the Director of Emergency Management (DEM) will notify the Chief Administration Officer (CAO) of the announcement as well as any timelines or guidelines to begin the re-opening process.
  - ii. Return to Work: Following the guidelines released by Alberta Health, the CVR will begin a gradual return to work as directed by the Executive Staff.
  - iii. Re-opening: Once 3.d.(iii) has been completed, the CAO can announce the re-opening policy for the County of Vermilion River. This may include; ratepayer access to front counter, Council in-person attendance, return to in-person meetings, and the easing of any other restriction made during the pandemic.
  - iv. Review: This step will involve the review of the actions taken during the pandemic, best practices and lesson leant, and how those practices can be included into this policy to improve performance. Such a review should consist of; an after action report, a summary to Council and a committee review of the policy.

## 4. BACKGROUND

- a. This policy is created to provide direction to executive staff when dealing with a pandemic emergency as declared by the Province of Alberta.
  - i. Since each pandemic will pose different threat levels, it is the goal of this section to dispense easy to understand instructions that may apply to any pandemic emergency.

- b. The lessons learnt from the COVID19 pandemic have been incorporated into this policy to better prepare the County of Vermilion River for the next public health emergency.
- c. The overlaying objective is to ensure that the County of Vermilion River municipal government and administration can continue to function and provide services to residents while working safely in an emergent situation.

## 5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- a. The main guideline for implementing this policy will be the formal acknowledgement that a Public Health Emergency exist through an announcement by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) or other Provincial Government Official.
- b. A key concept of this policy is the assurance that essential municipal government services will be provided to the public, and that the safety of our employees is kept in the forefront of the decision-making process.

## 6. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE/TASK	TITLE(S) OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE
<b>OVERALL DECISION MAKER</b>	Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
<b>HANDLING INQUIRIES</b>	Communications
<b>MONITORING REVIEWS AND REVISIONS</b>	Director of Emergency Management & Assigned Staff
<b>IMPLEMENTING POLICY</b>	Director-level Staff
<b>COMMUNICATING POLICY</b>	Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
<b>INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS</b>	Staff & Council
<b>EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS</b>	Ratepayers & General Public

## 7. EXCEPTIONS

- a. Exceptions will be meet on a case-by-case basis, or as guidelines from Alberta Health may alter this policy.
  - i. Changes, request for alternations or general notifications will be given to the Chief Administrative Officer in a written format (email), through the Director of Emergency Management.
  - ii. Pandemics are fluid situations with changing risk and associated responses; therefore, flexibility must be paramount when implementing directives in short order, especially as it pertains to public safety.

## 8. POLICY EVALUATION

- a. During a declaration, this policy will be subject to routine and frequent evaluation by the Director of Emergency Management, to ensure that the County of Vermilion River response corresponds to those of the Province of Alberta.
- b. Due to the longevity of a potential pandemic, the Director of Emergency Management will strive to keep all employees advised of the situation, actions taken and any other relevant information that may be used to safeguard the workplace.
- c. Once the Public Health Emergency has subsided and all pre-pandemic services have been restored, the Director of Emergency Management, will present a report to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) evaluating the policy, with emphasis on improving the steps, if the policy met the objectives and any lessons learnt that should be incorporated into the policy.