

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF GUYSBOROUGH
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC PLAN

March, 2020

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Municipality of the District of Guysborough Preparedness Plan

Introduction

The world is on the verge of experiencing a Coronavirus pandemic as indicated by the World Health Organization (WHO). The goal of the Municipality of the District of Guysborough (MODG) is to ensure the continued operation of the local government, including our Nursing Homes, to serve and assist the public. MODG will work closely with the Nova Scotia Departments of Health and Wellness, Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), and EMO Nova Scotia.

MODG's main priority with this Plan is the continued and effective operation of our local government and the health and safety of our staff.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to support the continuation and/or reinstatement of critical government functions during a pandemic.

The Plan fosters business continuity by outlining the action plans and processes to be followed by each department as they work toward the resumption of normal business operations.

Key Considerations

In preparing this plan it is assumed that that the Municipality will experience significant absenteeism as a result of the pandemic.

When preparing this plan it was considered that:

- the virus may spread rapidly leaving little or no time to prepare;
- the pandemic may be widespread with simultaneous outbreaks;
- there may be shortages of healthcare, emergency, and essential services personnel due to illness and absenteeism;
- there may be severe disruptions in essential services; and
- there may be shortages of equipment and supplies.

Plan Activation

The Chief Administrative Officer or designate shall have the authority to activate the Pandemic Plan, suspend the delivery of services and/or redeploy staff, as necessary.

In this event, existing staff may be asked to assist in areas of responsibility that are different from their regular staff assignment.

When the Plan is activated, the following organizational changes may be made.

1. The Chief Administrative Officer will continue to be responsible for directing the Municipality on a day-to-day basis in conjunction with Council and Senior Staff who will be meeting regularly to closely monitor the situation, if it is safe to do so.
2. The local Emergency Management Organization will also be activated if required.

Critical MODG Operations

Intention:

It is our intention to conduct the affairs of MODG in accordance with existing policies and operating procedures to the extent possible.

As the situation changes, decisions related to the following areas will be made by the Chief Administrative Officer or designate in consultation with Senior Staff:

- 1 Community use of our Buildings (Central Office, CLC, Waste Facility, etc.)
- 2 Courier Services
- 3 Use of Council Chambers
- 4 Essential Maintenance Services
- 5 Access Nova Scotia
- 6 Garbage Collection
- 7 Meetings
- 8 Professional Development Activities
- 9 Security of Facilities
- 10 Supplies Orders
- 11 Nursing Home Operations

Communications

Communication Goal

MODG's goal for communications is to inform our partners about the Plan and any related alterations to MODG and it's operations.

Communications Priorities/GOALS

Partners are confident that MODG is well prepared for a pandemic.

Partners are aware of the ways to get information, ask questions and receive clarification about the Plan.

Partners are highly satisfied at all times with the amount of information they are receiving and about the status of programs and services

Strategic Considerations

MODG will rely on the advice and guidance of our provincial and local public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation. Our priority is to keep local government operations functioning as long as it is safe to do so.

Key Messages

- Our plan is completely open to Council, staff, residents, and the community for their information, to ask questions and to receive clarification about the Plan.
- During a pandemic, MODG will follow the advice and guidance of provincial and local public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation.
- Our priority during a pandemic is to keep local government and nursing home operations functioning as long as it is safe to do so. Non-essential services may be restricted in order to focus on providing the most necessary services to our residents.
- An action plan will be communicated to MODG personnel and partners to support our priorities.

MODG Communications Checklist

Communicate to all Council and employees in March 2020 to inform them about the plan.

- Share information with community organizations, nursing homes, service providers, media;
- Participate in interagency pandemic planning;
- Publicize general restrictions;
- Post information on website and social media about relevant information to residents;

Action Plan Flowchart – Roles and Responsibilities

Action Plan Flowchart Priority: Keep local government operations functioning as long as it is safe to do so.

Purpose: The purpose of this plan is to support the continuation and/or reinstatement of critical MODG operations during a pandemic.

Chief Administrative Officer:

- activates the plan;
- Maintains Municipal Core Services

Municipal Clerk:

- spearheads information sharing about the Plan with Council and Staff, public and media;
- handles media inquiries related to the plan

Departments:

- inform and update employees about the plan;
- provide support (training, supplies, etc.) for infection prevention strategies;
- complete assigned responsibilities within the plan;
- collect and report required data, such as staff absenteeism reports;
- direct staff members to sources of coronavirus information;
- refer media inquiries on the pandemic to the CAO or Municipal Clerk.

Roles and Responsibilities

Operations

- Lead the Occupational Health and Safety components of the plan;
- Conduct all government operations, including cleaning, maintenance, construction and transportation, in accordance with the plan;
- Ensure the completion of assigned duties such as specific cleaning tasks, disinfecting of hard surfaces;
- Reschedule support staff to maximize the delivery of essential cleaning and transportation services during the pandemic;
- Ensure that facilities are provided with required cleaning materials and sanitation supplies and equipment;
- Monitor and address Occupational Health and Safety issues associated with the pandemic;
- Work with departments and outside agencies to continuously update pandemic information as it becomes available;
- Provide training to appropriate staff in specific sanitation strategies in relation to infection prevention; and

- Schedule staff meetings, if safe to do so, to provide information about department continuity plans. Managers/Supervisors hold meetings if necessary to make sure all staff receive messages face to face.

Human Resources

- Monitor staff absenteeism and respond accordingly;
- Confer with employees on coronavirus related issues, such as sick leave provisions;
- Modify staff hiring and replacement practices as necessary;
- Maintain updated casual and substitute list to assist with the hiring of replacement staff for affected employees;
- Work with supervisors, administrators and/or health care professionals to support return to work plans for employees; and
- Schedule staff meetings, if safe to do so, to provide information about department continuity plans. Managers/Supervisors hold meetings if necessary to make sure all staff receive messages face to face.

Finance

- Arrange necessary funding for supplies and services;
- Monitor and revise payroll, purchasing and contracting activities to maintain critical services;
- Track and report on the costs associated with the plan;
- Recommend necessary budget adjustments associated with the extra costs incurred as a result of the pandemic;
- Notify vendors of pertinent pandemic information;
- Monitor supplies and services necessary for required operations; and
- Schedule staff meetings, if safe to do so, to provide information about department continuity plans. Managers/Supervisors hold meetings if necessary to make sure all staff receive messages face to face.

Nursing Homes

Canso Seaside Manor and the Milford Haven Home for Special Care both recognize that Covid 19 is a specific hazard that could disrupt the operations of the facilities, the health care system and society as a whole. As such both facilities have Plans in place to ensure that staff in the facility are equipped with the knowledge, skill and resources to respond.

The goals of a response are as follows:

1. To minimize serious illness and overall deaths in the facility.
2. To minimize disruption to essential Long Term Care services in the facility as a result of an outbreak.
3. To contribute to an integrated health system response at the local, district and provincial level.

This facility plan has been designed as one aspect of the provincial, district and local response.

Employee Support

MODG recognizes and endorses the need for staff to safeguard their safety and wellness and that of their families.

Detailed information regarding employee support may be found in **Appendix 2**.

Human Resources Management

Prior history indicates that there will be second and third waves of the pandemic. While these later waves may be of variable severity, their impact may be reduced by the use of vaccines if developed. Consequently, MODG will have to continuously re-evaluate its status in the key areas of staffing. MODG will also have to quickly regroup and redeploy staff in order to maintain critical government services.

MODG shall also enact plans for the replacement of employees on sick leave. This may entail modified hiring practices as staffing priorities are identified during the reinstatement of services. In keeping with the collaborative and dynamic nature of the MODG plan, continuous monitoring and adjustments will be completed in consultation with health care professionals.

A third priority in human resources management will be support for employee re-entry to the workplace following prolonged absence due to illness.

MODG Continuity Plan

Administrators are responsible to prepare detailed continuity plans for their specific functions. The following is a broad outline of continuity planning for critical government functions.

Department: Administration

Function	Model of Service Delivery	Continuity Strategies
Follow duties as described in the FOIPOP Act in the event of an application under that Act	Municipal Clerk	Maintain service with backup provided by the CAO and Deputy CAO
Routine communications	Municipal Clerk	Maintain service with backup provided by the CAO and other assigned staff

Communications necessary as a result of the pandemic	Municipal Clerk	Maintain service with backup provided by the various assigned staff
Update the website with information as directed	Municipal Clerk	Maintain service with backup provided by IT Services
Maintain core Municipal Services such as Police and Fire, Tax Collection, etc.	CAO	Director of Fire, Emergency, and IT Services and the EMO Committee
Communicate with staff	CAO	Designated Director
Communications to Residents	All Staff	Use of Recreation Department Clerks

Department: Finance

Function	Model of Service Delivery	Continuity Strategies
Payroll	Process employee payroll and issue payments. Ensure employee group plan coverage is maintained and employees are receiving benefits due.	In consultation ABM and IT Services, set up remote payroll and payable computer site to process pay and payables.
Issue financial documentation	Documents prepared by Department of Finance personnel.	Defer non-urgent items; use remote work sites when appropriate
Maintain purchasing process, accounts receivable, accounts payable	Completed by Department of Finance personnel	Train additional staff to maintain purchasing process and overall financial transactions. Establish separate G/L account to track costs.
Processing of Workers' Compensation Board claims	Completed by Department of Finance personnel	Establish remote work sites and train additional staff in claims processing
Ensure sufficient funds are available to meet MODG obligations	Director of Finance	Review budget and bank statements. Establish separate G/L account to track costs.

Management of the Finance Department	Director of Finance	Assigned Alternate
Communicate with staff	Director of Finance	Assigned Alternate

Department: Human Resources

Function	Model of Service Delivery	Continuity Strategies
Coordinate human resources services at MODG	Municipal Clerk	Ensure adequate staffing at all required stations
Maintain dialogue with employee groups	Municipal Clerk	Department staff will maintain ongoing dialogue with MODG employee groups. Regular consultation will be held with unions.
Communicate with staff	Municipal Clerk	Senior Staff

Department: Operations

Function	Model of Service Delivery	Continuity Strategies
Train staff in sanitation and hygiene procedures	Facilities Maintenance to train staff in cleaning procedures	All staff as required
Maintain essential cleanliness in MODG facilities	Facilities Maintenance shall establish and ensure standards are met and set staffing requirements	Additional hours being allocated to increase sanitation levels of door handles, washrooms and counters
Identify and initiate the purchase of the required cleaning, sanitation and PPE supplies for schools and other sites	Required materials are identified by Facilities and OHS for purchase by the Director of Public Works	Suppliers have been identified for future additional requirements should the need dictate.
Solid Waste Collection from Residents	Director of Waste Management in conjunction with Director of Public Works to use existing staff for this service	Employment of outside Contractors if feasible.
Building maintenance (snow removal, grass mowing, grounds maintenance)	Provision of maintenance services is conducted by MODG staff under the direction of Public Works.	Non-essential maintenance work may be deferred should manpower shortages dictate. Contractors may be employed to carry out work should the situation dictate. The Director of Public Works shall initiate the use of various trades' contractors as required

Physical plant functions (heating, ventilation, power, water, waste water, fire safety equipment)	Adequate plant services must be provided to MODG building for safe operations.	Every effort will be made to keep MODG open and in safe condition. Office cancellations due to problems with the operation of physical plants shall be carried out in accordance with Policy
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Ensure adequate staff replacement for Landfill Operations	The Director of Waste Management shall ensure adequate shift schedules to maintain service.	The Director of Waste Management can provide outside contractor when necessary.
Management of Occupational Health and Safety Programs	Occupational Health and Safety Committee Co-Chairs	In the absence of the Co-Chairs, the Supervisor of Public Works or designate will assume the OHS management role.
Communication with staff	Required communication on issues shall flow through the Department Head to staff	Initial presentation to staff on the Plan and the required procedures will be communicated to and through Directors. Ongoing updates will be issued through managers and administration.

Appendix 1: Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Minimizing Illness Among Staff and Residents

Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms. You may not know you have symptoms of COVID-19 because they are similar to a cold or flu.

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. This is the longest known infectious period for this disease.

Symptoms have included:

- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing
- pneumonia in both lungs

In severe cases, infection can lead to death.

Prevention Strategies

The best way to avoid illness is through prevention. Health recommendations to stay well include:

- wash hands thoroughly and often in warm, soapy water – for at least 20 seconds - or use hand sanitizer as a backup;
- cough and sneeze into arms and sleeves, not your hand; if using tissues, dispose of them into appropriate receptacle and wash hands;
- stay home (school, work, public places) when displaying flu-like symptoms;
- disinfect doorknobs, counters, telephones, computer keyboards and other hard surfaces; and
- bring hand sanitizer when attending festivals, concerts or other events.
- do not share drinking glasses or eating utensils.

Most importantly, anyone – staff, residents, visitors – exhibiting symptoms should stay home. You are asked not to come to the Municipal Offices, Nursing Home or work if you have flu-like symptoms. If you have flu-like illness, Health recommends that you stay home until you are:

- Symptom free;
- Feeling well; and
- Able to fully participate in all normal day-to-day MODG activities.

MODG will ensure that sufficient supplies of hand cleansers and single use tissues are available in the work place and that receptacles are available for tissue disposal. MODG will also strive to provide a “clean” environment, however it is recognized that a clean environment is not necessarily a “sterilized” environment. Disinfectants will be provided in Municipal Properties for use by staff and residents. These will include waterless hand cleanser and spray bottles and wipes which contain disinfectant.

Primary strategies which will be used in order to minimize illness include:

- Restrict workplace entry of people with symptoms;
- Promote good personal hygiene practices and workplace cleaning practices;
- Minimize, where possible, situations where close contact is necessary (1 meter workspace rule, no shaking hands, limit number of meetings);

Intervention Strategies

Employees demonstrating flu-like symptoms at work are instructed to notify their supervisor and to leave work immediately and to contact a health professional for advice and direction.

Appendix 2: Employee Support

To assist with the maintenance of healthy staff members and to ensure that ill employees do not return to work prematurely and place others at risk, Human Resources shall institute modified employee benefit provisions during the pandemic as follows:

These are general guidelines and individual situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis through the employee's supervisor.

Sick Leave Accommodations

Staff

All Staff will be entitled to their accumulated amount of sick days; their total bank via their time off management tool.

Employees covered under the long term disability (LTD) plan will exhaust all sick benefits before being able to access LTD benefits – it is recommended that application to the plan be made at least 60 days prior to sick benefits coming to an end.

Compassionate/Bereavement Leave

- As per the Personnel Policy.

Fitness for Duty Guidelines

Fitness for Duty Guidelines provide direction for the length of time an employee should remain away from the workplace after contracting the coronavirus. This period of time will be 14 days unless otherwise stated. The guidelines also facilitate an employee's return to work once they are well.

MODG is committed to providing a safe work environment in the event of a pandemic, and to protect the health and safety of residents and staff.

These Fit for Duty Guidelines apply specifically to a pandemic event.

Purpose:

To provide procedures for identification and intervention when staff members may pose a health threat to the community because they have contracted the coronavirus related to the pandemic.

Definitions:

"Fit for Duty": means able to perform the duties of the job, without creating a risk for other staff of contracting the coronavirus.

"Health Service Provider" is a doctor of medicine, nurse practitioner or other health care practitioner who is qualified to provide a medical opinion on the state of health of a staff member as it relates to the coronavirus as expected in a pandemic event.

"Supervisor" is the person to whom a staff member reports

Employee Responsibilities:

1. Reporting to work when fit for duty
2. Notifying the supervisor when not fit for duty
3. Notifying the supervisor when observing a co-worker who may not be fit for duty (in cases where the possibly affected individual is the employee's supervisor, the employee should make the notification to the next higher level manager or Human Resources).
4. Cooperating with a supervisor's directive and/or referral for a medical evaluation

Supervisor Responsibilities:

1. Observing the attendance, performance and behavior of staff they supervise.
2. Interviewing an employee who appears to the supervisor unfit for duty and referring an employee for a medical evaluation when appropriate.
3. Recording the reasons/observations that triggered a fitness for duty medical evaluation referral.
4. Utilizing this policy in a fair and consistent manner, respecting the employee's privacy and the confidentiality of medical information.

Procedures:

1. The supervisor who receives reliable information that an employee may be unfit for duty, or through personal observation believes an employee to be unfit for duty, will validate and document the information or observations as soon as is practical. Actions that may trigger the need to evaluate an employee's fitness for duty with respect to this policy are limited to observation of conditions consistent with a pandemic event.
2. The supervisor will present the information or observations to the employee at the earliest possible time in order to validate them, and will allow the employee to respond to the concern. The supervisor will then determine whether the employee should leave the workplace immediately for safety reasons.
3. The supervisor may direct the employee to a health service provider to assess the condition of the employee. An employee may not be allowed to return to work until such an assessment has been provided or until the supervisor has been satisfied that the employee is fit to return to work.
4. The employer shall be responsible for the additional cost associated with any medical evaluations completed by a health service provider, if required by the employer.
5. Prior to returning to work after recovery from a virus consistent with a pandemic event, the supervisor shall consider advice received from the local health authorities on the length of time considered appropriate to recover from the virus, and the length of time the virus remains infectious.