

Emergency Management Update – October 2021

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Committee

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Prepared by: Latoya McGaw
Community Safety

Recommended by: General Manager of
Community Safety

Report Summary

This report provides information regarding the recent business activities, relevant statistics and good news stories within the Emergency Management Section, Community Safety Department.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This report refers to operational matters and has no direct connection to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

This report aims to provide the City of Greater Sudbury Emergency Services Committee with an update on information as it relates to recent business activities within the Emergency Management Section of the Community Safety Department.

The Emergency Management Section provides leadership, guidance, and direction to ensure the safety of residents in community emergencies. This Section is governed by the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA). The Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) and the Greater Sudbury Emergency Management Advisory Panel provide further direction and advice to the Emergency Management Section. This section offers 24/7 support with a primary focus on the safety of our citizens through the effective management of community risks and emergencies.

Emergency Response

COVID-19

The City of Greater Sudbury remains under a State of Emergency as was declared by Mayor Bigger on April 6th, 2020, due to the outbreak of coronavirus COVID-19, which constitutes a significant danger that could result in serious harm or death.

The Community Control Group (CCG) has met eighty times since being activated on March 16th, 2020. The CCG continues to meet virtually on a biweekly basis to discuss operations and response in light of COVID-19, as well as for future planning should there be case surges in the coming months and implementation of recovery plans.

As an added support to the CCG, Greater Sudbury Emergency Management Advisory Panel (GSEMAP) was repurposed as the Community Advisory Group (CAG) through which external emergency management stakeholders provide situational awareness and share information including public health guidance and facilitate information requests. The information gathered through these meetings are shared with the CCG as it provides a complete picture of needs, trends, and impact across the community.

COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation

In December 2020, after independent and thorough scientific reviews for safety and efficacy, Health Canada approved two vaccines for use in Canada: Pfizer-BioNTech (December 9th) and Moderna (December 23rd). An additional vaccine, Astra Zeneca was also approved by Health Canada in February 2021.

Public Health Sudbury & Districts (PHSD) unveiled a COVID-19 vaccination plan on January 15th, 2021 for its service area. The plan, Public Health Sudbury & District COVID-19 Vaccination Program Playbook, is the roadmap to vaccinate area residents against COVID-19. Vaccinations will follow the Ontario Vaccine Distribution and Implementation Plan and the recent COVID-19 vaccination updates issued by the Ontario government to implement the local vaccination program in three phases.

Phase 1 (January to March): vaccines will be offered to seniors in long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes, including staff and essential care givers; health care workers; adult (16+) First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations; and adult chronic home care recipients (16+).

Phase 2 (April to August): essential workers; adults aged 60+; staff and residents of additional congregate settings; at-risk populations; and remaining adults aged 16 to 59.

Phase 3 (September and ongoing): all remaining eligible populations who wish to be vaccinated.

The local vaccination program will be implemented in close partnership with community stakeholders to ensure access to vaccine is based on ethical principles and that the program is run efficiently.

The goal of the local vaccination program is to achieve a coverage level of at least 75% of eligible recipients in the service area, within the prescribed timeframe.

In support of the Province's efforts to get more Ontarians vaccinated, PHSD has ramped up efforts to make COVID-19 vaccines as easy and convenient for community members to get vaccinated. This includes measures such as the setup of pop-up clinics and a mobile vaccination clinic.

In collaboration with the City of Greater Sudbury (CGS), PHSD has launched the area's first mobile vaccine clinic. Starting July 13, the accessible and convenient mobile clinic traveled to locations in Public Health's service area to offer COVID-19 vaccine to residents. The mobile clinic, a converted transit bus, operated throughout the summer.

It is important to note that while the local plan is in place and being executed, it is subject to change based on the timing and availability of vaccines in the community.

Host Community Response

Annually, the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) seeks host communities' assistance in ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of First Nations community residents in the event there is a need for evacuation due to flooding or forest fires.

OFMEM in light of COVID-19, developed a new framework that would help First Nations residents stay in their communities. The decision to evacuate a community during this time would only be made in exceptional circumstances (i.e., potential threat to life and limb) and if all other options such as sheltering in place if feasible, have been exhausted or unsuitable.

As a result of the worsening wildfire situations in northwestern Ontario, some First Nations residents were forced to evacuate to host communities. Evacuees were flown to Thunder Bay, Kapuskasing, Timmins, Cochrane, and Greater Sudbury.

On July 12, 2021 the community of Pikangikum First Nations issued an Emergency Declaration due to the threat of fire and smoke from numerous wildland fires in the region. The declaration sought assistance from the Province to immediately evacuate the most vulnerable members of the community. From July 14th to 15th, 500 community members were evacuated via six flights to Greater Sudbury for accommodations.

While CGS was a host community, all operations, logistics and costs for the duration for the evacuation was funded by Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) with support from Canadian Red Cross and Community Disaster Response Ontario (CDRO) and the City.

The evacuation provided an opportunity for City Departments such as Emergency Management, Corporate Communications, Transit, Paramedic Services and Fire Services to work collaborative with community partners to create and sustain a safe, inviting and supporting environment for our guests from Pikangikum First Nations. Special services included the following:

- Transit provided the necessary transportation of all evacuees from the Sudbury airport upon their arrival, accounting for the special needs of elders, children, and those with disabilities.
- Community Paramedics worked with the healthcare sector providing wellness checks, COVID-19 testing and immunizations, and various other clinical services. In addition, Paramedic Services upstaffed a dedicated transporting ambulance and primary response unit and was a part of the Emergency Services Task Force lead by Greater Sudbury Police, assisting and responding to all requests for urgent and critical emergencies 24/7.

In early August, the Ministry of Northern Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (MNDNRF) completed fire assessments of the fires around the community as well as the associated fire risks and it was determined that the risk of returning all evacuees would be low. Based on this risk assessment, and the readiness in Pikangikum to support the return of their residents, the Pikangikum Chief and Council requested the return of all residents. On August 9th the remaining guests from Pikangikum First Nations in Greater Sudbury were returned to their home.

It is important to note that while our guests had returned home, host community planning was maintained in Greater Sudbury until mid-September. This was due to the high fire risk in Northwestern Ontario and the possibility of the need for another community to be evacuated at short notice.