



City of  
**Peterborough**

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**To:** Members of the General Committee

**From:** Richard Freymond  
Commissioner of Corporate & Legislative Services

**Meeting date:** May 10, 2021

**Subject:** Report CLSHR21-002  
Business Continuity Planning in the Event of Staff Absences

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## **Purpose**

A report to provide information to Council regarding the City's Business Continuity Planning in the event of staff absences.

## **Recommendation**

That Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report CLSHR21-002 dated May 10, 2021 of the Commissioner of Corporate and Legislative Services as follows:

That information about Business Continuity Planning in the event of staff absences in Report CLSHR21-002, dated May 10, 2021 of the Commissioner of Corporate and Legislative Services, be received for information.

## **Budget and financial implications**

There are no budget or financial implications as a result of Council approving the recommendation of this Report.

## **Background**

On December 14, 2020 as part of the approval of the City's 2021 Budget, Council directed that staff report back on efforts to ensure the City's continued business operations in the event of staff absences. The specific motion read as follows:

That Staff be directed to report back to Council outlining measures taken to support business continuity in the event of both short and long-term staff absences.

This report responds to the motion.

### **Business Continuity for Day-to-Day Events and Short-Term Absences**

The City has a number of statutory appointments where there are designated as being next in administrative rank with the power to act in the role as required. Examples include:

- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) / Deputy CAO
- City Clerk / Deputy Clerk (2X)
- City Solicitor / Associate City Solicitor
- Treasurer / Deputy Treasurer
- Chief Building Official / Deputy Chief Building Official
- Fire Chief / Deputy Fire Chief

For all Operating Divisions, there is a Manager position and at least one other NU position who provide continuity when one or the another is away. Examples include:

- Manager, Human Resources / Labour Relations Coordinator
- Facility Manager, Peterborough Sport and Wellness Centre (PSWC) / Assistant Manager, PWSC
- Manager, Transportation / Transit Operations Manager; Transit Supervisor (4X) / Transportation Services Coordinator, Parking Operations Supervisor
- Library CEO / Library Services Manager
- Chief Planner / Supervisor, Development Planning
- Chief Engineer / Manager of Public Works; Supervisor, Public Works (3X)

In two specific, high risk areas, business continuity includes the following:

- Wastewater Treatment Plant – An Overall Responsible Operator (ORO) must be at the plant 24/7/365. Staff are on rotating 12-hour shifts, and 2 NU staff share 24/7/365 requirements to be on call. There are also minimum staffing requirements and 24/7/365 on call for the Wastewater Collection System, Lab and Environmental Protection.
- Airport – Operations are provided by a Contractor. An Airport Superintendent oversees the Contract. Regular meetings are scheduled for updates from the Contractor with the Airport Superintendent, Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services and the CAO, who acts as the Airport Safety Management System Accountable Executive.

When Commissioners are absent from their positions, a Manager from within the department steps forward as the Acting Commissioner.

Within the City's union staff for each division, back-up provisions are also included in terms of multiple incumbents in a position or cross training. In many cases, specific wording is included in job descriptions that reference which other union position the position is expected to back up in their absence.

### **Short Term Planned Absences**

Planned absences such as vacation, personal days and lieu days are typically scheduled well in advance. The City's Collective Agreements have specific vacation scheduling provisions that assist managers in approving vacation that is operationally sustainable. Most Collective Agreements have deadlines to submit vacation requests and approvals are based on seniority. Some Collective Agreements also stipulate priority of scheduling, not only in terms of seniority, but also full weeks vacation takes precedence over individual days.

For those working a flex schedule/compressed work week, scheduled vacation and Personal day take precedence over flex days.

Same day vacation approval is discouraged, as these are unplanned and more challenging operationally.

### **Short Term Unplanned Absences**

Paid leaves, such as sick leave and bereavement leave entitlements for permanent employees are outlined in the Non-Union Handbook or their respective Collective Agreement (CA).

The **Employment Standards Act** allows employees, within Ontario, job protected leaves for a variety of reasons, such as for a family emergency. These are approved, unpaid absences.

Short term unplanned absences are difficult to manage operationally, although cross training staff significantly improves the ability for operational areas to ensure short term coverage.

### **Long Term Absences**

Long term absences that are known about in advance, such as a one-year maternity leave, allow the City to plan and recruit a temporary backfill for that position. These are posted according to the CA's and provide an opportunity for internal promotion and succession planning.

### **Managing Staff Absences**

The City has programs in place to manage staff absences due to illness. The Human Resources Division has a Wellness and Absence Management Coordinator that develops, implements, and administers occupational health, and wellness policies, procedures, training, and programs such as Return to Work (RTW) and Attendance

Awareness (AAP), to ensure that health measures are implemented and maintained throughout the City. The position works to educate and provide on-going analysis to all stakeholders within the City to raise attention to costs/trends and opportunities for improvement in the areas of occupational health and wellness. The position works to develop processes to ensure cost avoidance related to the use of sick time and WSIB.

Absences due to illness or injury extending beyond 1 calendar week are considered a long-term absence, in the context of paid sick time. Approval for paid sick time for extended absences (>1 week) requires third party sick leave adjudication, as per the Sick Leave/Short Term Disability/Long Term Disability Procedure. This procedure applies to all City employees. This process ensures a consistent approach to sick leave adjudication, but also supports the RTW process by obtaining required medical information to properly explore appropriate accommodations to return the employee back to work as soon as medically safe to do so.

The City's Wellness and Absence Management Coordinator leads the third-party sick leave adjudication process and supports operational areas by leading the RTW planning/employment accommodations process for complex cases related to injury or illness to support an early and safe return to work. Whether an employee remains in the workplace, or is returning from an absence, the corporate RTW/EA Procedure is applied.

Most permanent fulltime City employees have Long Term Disability coverage with an elimination period of 17 weeks. Once they have been off work on Short Term Disability for 17 weeks, if approved, they transition from Short Term Disability to Long Term Disability; transitioning from the City's payroll onto LTD directly. This allows the Manager to backfill the position at no added cost to the Division.

### **Business Continuity Planning**

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of ensuring robust business continuity planning is in place so that there is a fluid transfer of knowledge, expertise, information, and communication throughout all essential business operations of the City to ensure reliability and stability of services for City residents.

Since 2014, each Division within the City has a formalized Business Continuity Plan for essential services for an event such as the pandemic, other emergency events or in the case of a Strike. These plans are reviewed with Emergency Management annually and updated accordingly.

Divisional Business Continuity Plans include the following information:

- i. Process Damage Assessment**

The form is used to identify the extent of the disruption.
- ii. Key Contact List**

The list outlines staff, alternate contacts/back-ups, stakeholders, client, and supplier contacts as well as alternate providers for critical services/products.
- iii. Plan Activation**

Highlights specific actions that should be taken for Division specific processes when an incident occurs.
- iv. Response Phase**

Outlines an assessment and response to the immediate impact the incident will have on processes.
- v. Process Resumption Plans**

Defines how the critical functions and services will be resumed on a temporary basis, with a minimum set of resources and flows into how these will then be recovered to normal operations. It defines which steps are to be resumed to provide minimal outputs, and in what priority.
- vi. Recovery/Restoration Strategy**

Describes how work arounds selected will be ramped down and transitioned back to normal, what will happen with the data or records created during the use of the work around and how operations will transfer work back to fully provisioned location including transferring back any process steps transferred to another location.

This process involves operational debriefs between Emergency Management and each division. Through these debriefs, discussions take place around how a process was done prior to an emergency, how processes were adapted during the emergency to maintain business continuity, and how processes will be following the emergency. An After-Action Report will summarize a series of “lessons learned” throughout the disruption and is sent to the appropriate approval level depending on what the work arounds have been. The plan review will look at any new IT dependencies, staffing and facility implications. Also, consideration may be given for a policy and procedure for maintaining some level of remote work environment. While many areas could easily transition back to on-site work, that may be a challenge for others.

Business continuity plans also account for the technological infrastructure that is required to handle a significant increase in employees working remotely including related cybersecurity risks. Moreover, business continuity plans take into the consideration the impact of the practices of vendors and suppliers on any essential City business service interruptions during the event.

## **Succession planning**

Commissioners and Division Managers do discuss informally succession planning through cross training and supporting professional development of staff. The development of staff prepares them to step into an Acting Manager or Acting Commissioner role. Learning those skills and having worked experience helps their personal development and may help them decide if they are interested in the position permanently should it become vacant in the future.

Supporting professional development is an activity within the Human Resources Division using a modest Corporate Training budget for coaching and leadership related training.

## **Summary**

The City has numerous measures in place to support business continuity in the event of staff absences.

Submitted by,

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