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REPORT TITLE: ***Municipal Emergency Act, 2020 – Electronic Participation in Open and Closed Meetings***

FROM: Kathryn Lockyer, Acting Commissioner of Corporate Services

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Emergency Electronic Meeting Procedures, attached as Appendix I to report of the Acting Commissioner of Corporate Services, titled “*Municipal Emergency Act, 2020 – Electronic Participation in Open and Closed Meetings*”, be approved;**

**And further, that a by-law to amend Procedure By-law 56-2019 to enable electronic meetings to be held during a period of declared emergency, be presented for enactment.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Amendments to the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, provide that during a declared municipal emergency, members of council, local boards and committees may participate electronically in open and closed meetings and be counted for the purposes of quorum.
- An amendment to the Region of Peel Procedure By-law is required to permit electronic attendance at Council and Committee meetings.
- Proposed procedures to enable electronic council meetings to be held during a period of declared emergency are attached as Appendix I.

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## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Background**

On March 17, 2020, the provincial government declared a state of emergency to help protect the public and contain the spread of COVID-19.

The *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020* (the *MEA*) was approved on March 19, 2020 to provide that, during a declared municipal or provincial emergency, a municipality's procedure by-law may be amended to provide that members of council, local boards and committees may participate electronically in open and closed meetings and be counted for the purposes of quorum. Use of this emergency provision is at each municipal council's discretion. The *MEA* also provides that a special meeting may be called in order to adopt said provisions, and that the members of the council may participate in that meeting electronically and be counted towards quorum.

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### **2. Proposed Direction**

Recommended precautions against the spread of COVID-19 include social distancing and not participating in gatherings of more than 50 people. A Council meeting is a large gathering of people in closed conditions and therefore, it is in the interest of the health of members, staff and the public that the option for electronic participation in Council and Committee meetings be established for this and any future declared emergencies.

The Council Chambers located at the Regional Administrative Headquarters will serve as the central location of each meeting, with the Regional Clerk (or designate) present to assist the Regional Chair or other Presiding Officer. The Chief Administrative Officer and the Regional Clerk, in consultation with the Regional Chair and the Commissioner of Digital and Information Services, will determine the method and technology used for an electronic meeting in open session or closed session, based on the available information technology resources and the prevailing circumstances of the meeting.

A by-law to amend Procedure By-law 56-2019 is recommended for enactment to enable electronic meetings to be held during a period of declared emergency and for electronic participants to be counted towards quorum and to participate in camera.

Proposed procedures to enable electronic council meetings to be held during a period of declared emergency are attached as Appendix I. The Procedures would apply to any electronic meeting held in conjunction with the amendments to Procedure By-law 56-2019. Amendments to the Procedures may be approved by Regional Council by a majority vote.

The Procedures include provisions related to:

- Roll Call and attendance during the meeting
- Debate/Request to Speak and Speaker's List
- Member Speaking
- Motions
- Voting
- Conduct of Members
- Delegations and Public Participation

In order to ensure social distancing can be maintained within the Council Chambers, Members are requested to inform the Office of the Regional Clerk (either orally or in writing), 24 hours prior to commencement of any meeting at which they intend to participate electronically.

### **CONCLUSION**

As the Special Regional Council Meeting scheduled for March 26 will be the first time that the amended Procedural By-law is used, staff may refine and propose alternate options for the associated processes which can be implemented at future meetings that are held in this manner.

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### **APPENDICES**

#### Appendix I – Proposed Emergency Electronic Meeting Procedures

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Ava Macintyre, Deputy Clerk, Ext. 4462, [ava.macintyre@peelregion.ca](mailto:ava.macintyre@peelregion.ca).*

*Authored By: Christine Thomson, Legislative Specialist and Jill Jones, Legislative Specialist*

*Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:*

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Polsinelli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nancy" and last name "Polsinelli" clearly distinguishable.

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N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer