

For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Overview of Regional Emergency Management 2021 Program Activities**

FROM: Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an overview of the Regional Emergency Management program's activities undertaken in 2021.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Regional Emergency Management (REM) continues to provide support to the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) and has been heavily involved in the ongoing Mass Vaccination Program.
 - In early March, the Corporate Security program joined the Regional Emergency Management program and ongoing integration of the two program areas continues.
 - In addition to supporting the Region's COVID-19 response, Mass Vaccination Program and the REOC, Regional Emergency Management also responded to and supported various community emergencies with our municipal partners.
 - Limited supports were made available and provided to the Provincial First Nations evacuations and Federal efforts to resettle individuals from Afghanistan.
 - Legislative compliance requirements of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and Ontario Regulation 380/04 will be achieved by the end of 2021.
 - Planned revisions to the Region of Peel Emergency Plan have progressed when possible but will be finalized in early 2022 rather than by the end of 2021.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (the "Act") establishes the province's legal basis and framework for emergency management practices within the Province of Ontario and outlines municipal compliance standards. REM ensures that the Region of Peel (the "Region") meets or exceeds all legislated requirements under the Act.

Further REM maintains the 24/7 ability to respond to significant events or emergencies within the Region and when necessary, may support responses that are Provincial or Federal led if there are local impacts or consequences.

While the traditional methods used to deliver program activities have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, alternate delivery modes have been implemented to satisfy both the program obligations and annual compliance requirements.

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REM has supported the Region's COVID-19 response since January 2020 and throughout the activation of the REOC and Declaration of Emergency made in March of 2020. In late 2020, REM joined the planning process for the Mass Vaccination Program and has continued to support the operational activities of both fixed and mobile clinic locations. While it is expected the REOC will wind down by the end of 2021, support for the Mass Vaccination Program is presumed to continue into 2022.

2. Regional Emergency Operations Centre and Mass Vaccination Program Support

The REOC has remained activated throughout 2021, with a reduced frequency of meetings since the overall situation has stabilized. As part of the REOC's Command and General Staff, REM continues to support the REOC with emergency management guidance and administrative support.

In late March, the third cohort of REOC staff was formed allowing for some redeployed individuals to transition back to their home positions. Select individuals from the second cohort remain in the current cohort and a small group of individuals have remained with the REOC since its activation on March 10th, 2020. Many of the staff from the REOC were also assigned to various roles and responsibilities in the vaccination program, including the Manager of REM.

In July, REM and REOC staff along with individuals from other program areas were pulled together to support the provincial response related to First Nations evacuations due to forest fires. This effort was balanced with the ongoing vaccination efforts and COVID-19 isolation housing for individuals. Many of the same individuals further provided limited support to the federal government efforts to the resettle individuals from Afghanistan.

Throughout the REOC activation, REM worked with both internal and external stakeholders to maintain situational awareness on each of the above-mentioned situations, along with maintaining a role as a liaison between our municipal and provincial emergency management partners. This has included:

- Facilitating weekly emergency management stakeholder coordination calls
- Participating in weekly communications and by-law enforcement calls
- Participating in twice weekly ministry and municipal partners coordination calls led by the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre
- As needed coordination and issues management discussions with municipal Community Emergency Management Coordinators
- Participation in as needed incident specific coordination calls (First Nations evacuations and Afghan resettlements)

With respect to the mass vaccination clinics, REM has supported a broad range of activities during both the planning and operational phases of the clinic. Beginning with the collection and collation of an inventory of municipal facilities for consideration as clinic sites, this effort extended into supporting the site planning and high-level procedures prior to clinic operations initiating. The identification of roughly ten locations for consideration as drive thru clinic locations along with corresponding site configurations was also completed by REM with the support of Health and Safety, Transportation planning, Corporate Security and Facility and Occupancy Services and others.

REM also supported the development of several contingency protocols for the clinics, leveraging existing procedures where possible, along with the facilitation of a series of

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tabletop exercises to evaluate the effectiveness of the contingencies. In some cases, improvements were made that have remained in place throughout the clinic operations.

REM's 24/7 Duty Officer role was identified early as central reporting point for urgent clinic issues and by early September had received nearly 140 calls related to the clinics. While most issues were easily addressed through the implementation of contingency plans, some were escalated to the larger clinic operations team for support and resolution. The majority of the calls were associated with client medical events, facility or minor security issues.

Both REM and Corporate Security provided planning support in conjunction with other areas of Real Property and Asset Management for special events held at the vaccination clinics. Individual events like Doses After Dark, drive thru clinics, media visits with Provincial officials as well as staff recognition events have all been supported to date.

3. Corporate Security

At the beginning of March, the Corporate Security program joined REM. Previously, staff had been in two other program areas within Real Property and Asset Management but had worked closely with REM on several efforts including the planning for mass vaccination clinics. As a result of the inclusion of the Corporate Security program, the organizational structure is as follows.

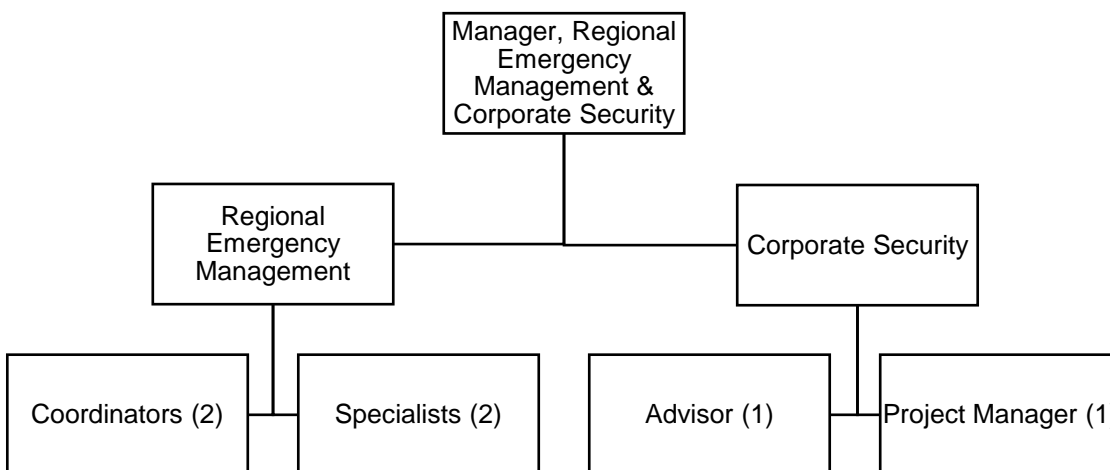


Figure 1: Regional Emergency Management & Corporate Security Structure

With the addition for Corporate Security, many of the security projects that had previously commenced were carried over and added to those with REM. These projects are mainly focused on improving the physical security of Regional sites, procedural improvements in security processes and improving and consolidating various security contracts.

In addition, Corporate Security has been heavily involved in the planning and operations of all modes of vaccination clinics that have been implemented to date and will continue to be involved in the foreseeable operations. Involvement has included but is not limited to the following areas.

- Pre-clinic security assessments
- Staff and vendor training
- Critical event response and support
- Vendor contract administration
- Line management supports

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- Clinic flow improvements
- Special event planning and support
- Random security audits and improvements as needed

Further alignment of both REM and Corporate Security will continue as the operations of both the REOC and vaccination clinics scale back in their operations.

4. Community Responses

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 response, REM and our internal and external stakeholders maintained the ability to respond and support significant events or emergencies in our community. During 2021, there were a handful of situations that developed, to which REM and other stakeholders responded. These events were generally one to two days in duration and did not require a significant draw of divisions or program areas.

With COVID-19 measures in place, coordination of supports and services took place remotely, however there were a small number of situations where a resources deployed to the site.

As with most responses, reviews of each response by stakeholders were undertaken and operational improvements were identified and, in many cases, implemented. Given that most organizations have adopted a remote first model over a traditional onsite support model, many of the operation improvements were procedural in nature with the goal of improving processes for the client's benefit.

5. Provincial and Federal Response Support

Layered onto the Region's COVID-19 and vaccination efforts, two significant events at Provincial and Federal levels occurred over the summer in quick succession to one another. Beginning in mid-July and as a result of extreme forest fire volumes and sizes in Northwestern Ontario several First Nations communities were evacuated within span of about a week. This included the evacuation of approximately 350 individuals from Cat Lake First Nation to a hotel within the Region of Peel for approximately three weeks. As the planning efforts for the return of individuals to Cat Lake First Nation was underway, REM and others were contacted by the Federal government to begin the immediate planning for the arrival of several hundreds of individuals from Afghanistan who had supported Canadian military and diplomatic efforts. High level summaries of both events can be found below.

a) Cat Lake First Nations Evacuation

In early April, the provincial Chief of Emergency Management was advised that the Region would be unable to offer support as a Host Community for out of jurisdiction evacuees in 2021. This decision was made on the following considerations at the time.

- The sizeable redeployment of staff in support of the current COVID-19 response
- The degree of community spread, including several variants, of COVID-19 within the region
- Significant additional resources had been committed to both vaccination efforts and providing residents with isolation supports

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While sympathetic to the potential need to secure Host Communities, there were insufficient resources to support Host Community operations without compromising the Region's ongoing COVID-19 response, vaccination operations and isolation supports. A copy of the notice is included as Appendix I of this report.

In mid-July, the forest fire situation in Northwestern Ontario rapidly deteriorated with several consecutive days of large numbers of fires that did not respond to suppression efforts, resulting in both proximity and air quality concerns in multiple remote First Nations communities. Host Community capacity that had been secured by the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) was quickly exceeded. Calls for additional Host Communities were received by many municipalities including the Region despite the previous notice that we could not support Host Community activities.

Ultimately, a hotel location in Mississauga was identified by the OFMEM and a third party was secured to provide management, support and operational resources at the host site. The third party and the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) established a liaison with the REOC and the emergency management programs of both Mississauga and Brampton. The site operated for roughly three weeks.

Municipal resources provided both onsite and community based recreational activities for many of the 350 evacuees. The Region offered various harm reduction and childcare supports to the site managers. Public Health supports were also coordinated through Ontario Health and Public Health.

REM collected, collated, maintained and distributed situational awareness with internal and external stakeholders and the site coordinators.

When necessary the site coordinators were connected with other local supports. Lastly, daily participation in coordination calls with the PEOC, Cat Lake First Nation, Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry and others throughout the host operation took place.

At the request of the PEOC, a REM resource deployed to the host site to support the first day of return flights in the event any issues developed that may have required local stakeholder support. Ultimately, no issues developed, and the opportunity was used to connect in person with the site coordinators, OFMEM Field Officers, Peel Regional Police (Emergency Support Services), community leaders and the evacuees.

b) Resettlement of Afghan Individuals

During the last week of July, the Federal government contacted the Region to advise that due to a rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, there was an urgent need to resettle individuals who had worked for and supported the Canadian diplomatic and military missions. The initial estimation for the operation was that several government and chartered flights would be used to relocate individuals from overseas to Pearson International Airport and onto local quarantine sites before relocating to resettlement communities in Canada.

During the quarantine period, further medical screening and health care supports were provided including initial COVID-19 vaccinations. In addition to Public Health, Peel Paramedics and other local healthcare supports, REM attended coordination calls with mainly federal immigration and health care stakeholders. Using a similar approach to

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the First Nations evacuations, other local stakeholders and supports were advised of the situation and planned to provide additional supports if requested. Ultimately, additional supports were not called upon.

Resettlement operations by the federal government concluded in early September and coordination calls were paused shortly afterwards.

6. Compliance Activities

Throughout 2021, REM has worked to ensure that the annual program requirements identified in the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and Ontario Regulation 380/04 will be met or exceeded. Understanding that commitments to the clinics and the ongoing COVID-19 response were likely to limit the traditional modes used to achieve the requirements, REM looked for and leveraged opportunities during the planning for clinics as well as onboarding orientation of staff members to satisfy many of the annual requirements.

A full report on REM's compliance activities in 2021 will be provided at the November 2021 Emergency Management Program Committee meeting.

7. Region of Peel Emergency Plan Updates

Revisions to Region of Peel Emergency Plan (the Plan) began in mid-2019 with the intent of the finalized Plan being submitted to the May 2020 Emergency Management Program Committee for approval followed by Regional Council for adoption through a by-law.

In January 2020, REM was seconded to the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre to provide support to the monitoring of COVID-19 cases and initial contingency planning efforts prior to the development of local cases. Plan updates continued albeit when there was an opportunity to do so.

With the activation of the REOC followed by the Declaration of an Emergency in March of 2020, further work on the Plan was paused indefinitely. Despite the pause, notes and observations throughout the COVID-19 response were captured for amendments and improvements to the Plan.

The easing of the overall COVID-19 situation in the Fall of 2020, enabled the brief resumption of work on the Plan but was once again suspended with the ramp up of both vaccination planning and effects of the third wave. Efforts remained paused until the beginning of July once the effects of the third wave had largely passed and clinic operations stabilized. The resumption of work on the Plan was further slowed by the mid-summer support to the First Nations evacuations and resettlement of individuals from Afghanistan.

With the scaling back of clinic operations and conclusion of both the First Nations evacuations and resettlement efforts, it is anticipated REM will be able to complete the remaining tasks for updating the Plan during the Fall and then begin broader consultations with supporting departments, divisions and programs before meeting with the Executive Leadership team in early 2022. The Plan will be presented to the Emergency Management Program Committee during the May 2022 meeting for their review and anticipated approval. As per the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, the Plan will be required to be implemented through a by-law.

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CONCLUSION

The scope of activity of the Regional Emergency Management program has expanded to include the Corporate Security program along with the ongoing supports to the Region's COVID-19 and mass vaccination efforts. These areas in addition to Regional Emergency Management's traditional role along with continued Regional Emergency Operations Centre supports has resulted in a challenging but successful year. Ensuring that the Region is positioned effectively to respond and support both community and internal emergencies remains the program's priority. Further improvements will be realized with the completion of the Region of Peel Emergency Plan in 2022 along with ongoing improvements in both the Security and Business Continuity areas.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Host Community Letter to the OFMEM

Authored By: Andrew C. Cooper, Manager - Regional Emergency Management and Corporate Security