

## **Staff Report 2020-0268**

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Meeting Date: August 25, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan

Submitted By: Devan Lobo, Senior Analyst, Corporate Initiatives, Strategic Initiatives

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan recommended actions outlined in Staff Report 2020-0268, be approved;

That the Caledon Public Library (CPL) Board's expressed support for the recommendations, be endorsed;

That Community Connectivity Kits be purchased in 2020 and the 2021 operating costs be funded from the Town's Operating Contingency Reserve in the amount of \$6,360;

That affiliate rental rates for indoor pool and arena usage be discounted by fifty percent for the period of August 4, 2020 to April 12, 2021 for affiliate groups only, with the 2020 loss of revenue of \$166,770 to be funded from the operating contingency reserve and the 2021 loss of \$150,220 to be funded from the operating contingency reserve;

That a by-law be enacted to amend the 2020 Fees and Charges By-law 2019-78, as amended to include new fees for:

- Tax Certificate (online) – \$75.00
- Wire Payment Fee – \$15.00
- Caledon Public Library Overdue Circulation Fines – no fee

That the administration fee of \$50.00 for each marriage licence requiring replacement for reasons related to the pandemic, be waived.

### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- On March 17, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Province of Ontario enacted a Declaration of Emergency, immediately closing various facilities, institutions and public spaces.
- At all levels of government and across the local Caledon community, various response measures continued to be put in place to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- While public safety continues to be the top priority, the Province of Ontario is gradually moving from response to recovery but cautioning the potential for a second wave of COVID-19.
- Despite the move from response to recovery, the impacts from the pandemic continue to be experienced by the Caledon community.

- In June 2020, the Town launched the Community Recovery Team (CRT) to develop a Community Recovery Plan.
- Through a collaborative approach, the CRT reviewed COVID-19 economic and social impacts in Caledon, available government and community supports, municipal best practices for recovery, and consulted with the community.
- Based on the CRT review and discussions, in order to most effectively respond to the needs of the community and support Caledon's recovery, the Team recommends the Town: support Caledon's economy, provide businesses tools for success, empower community organizations, support community connectedness and increase access to information.
- By implementing initial recovery actions in these areas, the Town can work with and support the community to continue to navigate necessary changes during this pandemic and beyond to build a more resilient Caledon community.

## DISCUSSION

### Background

On March 17, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Province of Ontario enacted a Declaration of Emergency, immediately closing various facilities, institutions and public spaces. The next day on March 18, 2020, the Town of Caledon declared a State of Emergency, officially closing Town facilities to the public and implementing a wide range of service level adjustments. At all levels of government and across the local Caledon community, various response measures continued to be put in place, such as closing all non-essential businesses and restrictions on public gatherings, to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Local first responders and front-line health care providers continue to play a vital role in the health and safety of the community in responding to and recovering from the pandemic.

Following several extensions of the provincial Declaration of Emergency, in late April 2020, the province released its Framework for Reopening Ontario. In June 2020, the Town of Caledon's Community Recovery Team (CRT), in consultation with the broader community, began researching COVID-19 impacts and community needs, developing options for economic and social recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected residents and businesses in unprecedented ways. Responding to the pandemic requires a new or modified understanding of the circumstances that society is facing; how the measures that the Town strives to bring forward will work with physical distancing measures in place, the fluctuating state of businesses or reach segments of the population adversely affected by the pandemic.

It is important to also recognize the positive impacts realized as a result of the pandemic. COVID-19 has encouraged digital transformation and modernization of government, presenting an opportunity for government to deliver services and support communities in new ways as well as strengthen relationships with community stakeholders.

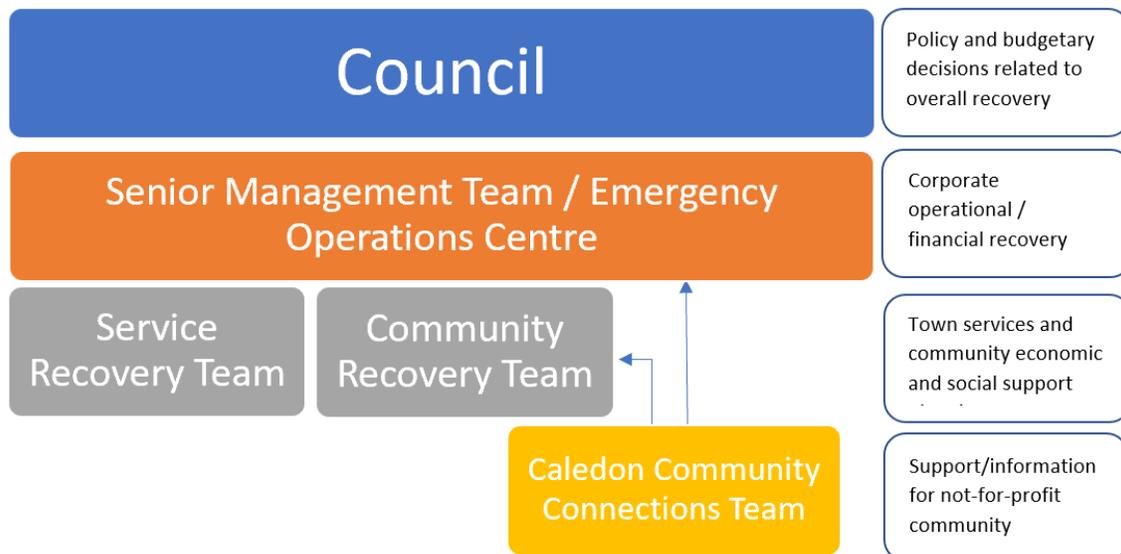
The proposed Community Recovery Plan sets out a coordinated approach to guide Caledon's recovery, in alignment with the Province's phased reopening and recovery plan. As of July 31, 2020 Peel Public Health region, which includes Caledon, moved into the next phase of recovery, increasing indoor and outdoor gathering limits and permitting dine-in for food and drink establishments. Businesses that could, have opened while meeting public health advice and workplace safety measures, as have more community, recreational and outdoor spaces with social distancing measures still in place. Furthermore, the Town of Caledon continues to reopen additional amenities and facilities.

The proposed Town actions outlined in this report can assist residents, businesses and organizations during reopening and in recovering from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff recommend the plan remain flexible in order to evolve with the changing needs of the community and potential second wave of COVID-19 cases.

### **Community Recovery Framework**

The CRT operates within the Town's COVID-19 Recovery Framework (Figure 1). Co-chaired by the Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the CRT is comprised of members from the Caledon Community Connections Team and staff representatives across the corporation.

Figure 1: Town of Caledon COVID-19 Recovery Framework



The COVID-19 Community Recovery Team consists of thirteen members:

- Mayor - Co-Chair
- Chief Administrative Officer - Co-Chair
- General Manager of Strategic Initiatives
- Corporate Initiatives/CRT Support
- Staff representation from:
  - Three (3) members of the Community Connections Team (includes staff from Recreation Services, Service Caledon and the Caledon Public Library)
  - Two (2) staff from Economic Development & Tourism Division
  - One (1) staff from Finance Division
  - One (1) staff from Recreation Services Division
  - One (1) staff from Adult 55+ Administration
  - One (1) staff from Mayor & Council Office

### Method

In order to develop the plan, research and analysis was undertaken and considered from a variety of perspectives including, but not limited to business, tourism, resident, older adult and youth, among others. The CRT conducted and compiled data from various consultations and engagement opportunities with members of the Caledon community, considering the most relevant and up-to-date data possible.

Consultation opportunities included surveys of local businesses, residents, sports and recreation affiliates, non-profit organizations, and a call in Community Recovery Town Hall. For a list of consultation opportunities, refer to Schedule A.

Through consultations, the CRT was able to better identify and understand the economic and social impacts from COVID-19 and community needs. The information gathered allows the Town to customize and tailor recovery actions and provide support that meets the specific, urgent needs of the community.

In addition, a municipal scan of recovery activities and efforts of comparable municipalities was reviewed. Furthermore, the CRT considered existing government and community supports available and legislation such as the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act.

Following analysis of the data, the CRT identified and reviewed options such as policies, programs, grants, partnerships, advocacy opportunities, and communications, among others, where the Town can most effectively respond to the needs of the community and support Caledon's recovery. The proposed plan is based on a number of assumptions such as that the Provincial reopening framework continues to move forward through the recovery phases.

## **Findings**

### *Economic Impact of COVID-19*

During the pandemic, Economic Development staff conducted two COVID-19 Business Impact surveys. The results indicate that negative economic growth was experienced throughout the first half of this year with negative impacts to the labour market. The business community has taken a significant hit financially, making it difficult to pay rent, utilities and materials where a small percentage of Caledon businesses have had to close their doors permanently. Initially businesses turned to layoffs to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic. In April, the business community reported experiencing loss of revenue, reduction in customers/sales, employee lay-offs/workforce displacement and added expenses to mitigate health risks as an affect of the pandemic. About 45% of businesses surveyed estimated revenue decline of 75% or more as a result of COVID-19 (since March 15).

Businesses are still experiencing challenges, both financially and in terms of reopening and managing the health safety risks and measures. The second COVID-19 Business Impact Survey conducted in June indicates about 40% indicated cash flow would be okay for the next 6 months compared to 27% in April. While over 15% of businesses surveyed reported needing financial assistance immediately. More recently, businesses have looked to reduce hours of operation/production, emergency loans or refinancing and temporarily shutting down operations. The survey suggests recovery may take longer than initially thought. If the pandemic ended today only 36% of businesses indicate recovering in a 1–6-month timeframe, with 14% indicating it would take over 12 months.

Top concerns for Caledon businesses include the financial impact, cancellations and workforce impact. In addition, the second survey suggests businesses are concerned with the difficulty to access funding and cybersecurity issues. About 75% of businesses utilized economic response measures, primarily the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, Emergency Wage Subsidy and Emergency Business Account (administered by financial institution). Despite the response measures utilized, businesses suggest more information on government financial assistance, assistance on how to protect employees and customers from COVID-19 and shop local marketing campaigns would be most helpful.

As businesses continue to reopen and restrictions lessen, they require a plan to protect their customers and follow health and safety requirements, sourcing and purchase of personal protection equipment. Businesses as well as tourist areas are experiencing cost pressures to maintain health and safety and generally manage local tourist volume. For example, the need for access to regularly sanitized washrooms, the regular sanitization of all hard surfaces and allowing 48+ hours between visitor stays in accommodations.

Though the economy is reopening, economic projections for the near future are bleak. In the short-term, the Region of Peel projects minimal population growth, steep decline in business activities, increase in unemployment rate, increase in Ontario Work's caseloads, decline in building permits, decline in housing starts, decline in labour force and employment and increased bankruptcies. However, in the medium-term the Region expects the economy to gradually pick up with a significant increase in labour force and employment, reaching a more positive outlook in the long-term (4-5 years).

### *Social Impact of COVID-19*

During the pandemic, though the impacts vary across the community, generally residents' physical and mental health have been at risk. Residents have been coping with increased mental health issues, grief and isolation, as well as experiencing financial implications. Many are concerned about the ability to maintain social ties, family stress from confinement, personal/family mental health and education.

The demand for services has put a strain on front-line service providers as well as community support organizations who are also limited in their ability to fundraise through typical means such as events. A survey of non-profits, community partners, service organizations and clubs from Spring 2020, showed 83% have adapted their services. About 55% identified they will endure financial difficulty due to COVID-19. In addition, at the time of the survey, 18% of organizations reported they did not have enough staff or volunteers. These organizations continue to worry about long-term sustainability issues.

Through the COVID-19 Resident Impact Survey, about 39% of respondents said they took advantage of economic or community supports, only 1% said they haven't but will. Respondents tended to access financial and employment related supports, tax and/or bill payment deferrals as well as business supports. About 20% of residents had trouble accessing supports due to lack of availability, affordability and access to information. Though many businesses and community organizations adapted to provide online or modified services, this does not serve to address the needs of residents who are not connected via technology.

Furthermore, respondents identified a need for childcare and early learning, financial and employment assistance, health services and tax and/or bill payment deferrals. However, 46% of respondents identified that no assistance is needed.

Overall, the financial situation and physical distancing measures in place have made it difficult for organizations to respond to community needs. As restrictions have and continue to be lessened, residents and businesses are reopening, re-engaging and continuing to adapt. This may alleviate some concerns regarding isolation and confinement, and childcare. The reopening of businesses across Ontario may also contribute to addressing financial and employment assistance needs of individuals.

## **Available Government/Community Supports**

In response and anticipation of the economic and social challenges due to COVID-19, various government and community organizations introduced or enhanced supports. By understanding the existing supports offered by all levels of government and community organizations, the Town's Community Recovery Plan can avoid duplication of services and identify gaps or areas of opportunity in supports.

Generally, informational and financial supports have been provided to residents, businesses and organizations.

### *Town of Caledon Supports*

Working with the Region of Peel, from a financial perspective the Town has acted to support Caledon residents and businesses. The Town waived all penalty and interest charges on property taxes until December 31, 2020 to provide a deferral to all Caledon property taxpayers who are experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Region of Peel deferred the planned 2020 water rate increase of 7.2% and introduced a 91-day grace period for water bills due from April 1 – June 30. In addition, Regional TransHelp fares were waived. This was followed by the Town waiving non-sufficient funds (NSF) and other financial fees to provide assistance to residents and businesses. The Town also refunded payments for Town programs and facility rentals, and monthly lease payments were cancelled while public facilities were closed. To assist Town of Caledon affiliate groups, all fees for outdoor sports fields have been waived until September 6, 2020. The proposed by-law amendments included in the August 25 Council Meeting Agenda for the 2020 Fees and Charges By-law includes the waived fees for affiliate rentals related to outdoor sport fields. The waived fees were approved by Council on July 7, 2020. Note, the Caledon Public Library discontinued the accrual of overdue library fines until regular library services resume. As Caledon was permitted to begin reopening, a discounted Welcome Back incentive was implemented to encourage residents to return to recreation facilities and get active.

Working with the Region of Peel, the Caledon Community Connections Team responded to the pandemic with online resources, outreach to connect organizations with existing resources, organized donations, and advocated for supports for non-profits. The Region of Peel also provided COVID-19 funding for community agencies delivering essential services and meeting needs of vulnerable community. In addition, the Region offered a Reaching Home Fund aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness, as well as a Social Service Relief Fund to help communities respond to the increased and changing demands for services to vulnerable residents.

With respect to businesses, the Town's COVID-19: Support for Business webpage is frequently updated and contains links to pertinent business-related programs from the

Province and Federal government. Information is also provided through the Town's business newsletter. Similarly, many industry and business associations provided lists of resources for their respective memberships.

In support of Caledon's economic recovery, the Town launched a 'Shop Local' campaign with an interactive online map of open local businesses available to customers and introduced a supportive approach to permit temporary outdoor patio spaces helping local restaurants increase seating capacity during the pandemic. In addition, free online business events, webinars and training are available on the Town's business events webpage. In July, the Town facilitated 'Business Reopening and Recovery: A webinar with Peel Public Health' where businesses obtained clarity on health requirements for COVID-19. Furthermore, the Town continues to launch online tools in support of economic growth and recovery.

Town of Caledon capital projects continue through the pandemic with the exception of a short list of deferred projects, which keep businesses and workers employed during the pandemic while repairing and renewing Town infrastructure.

Where required measures are not within the Town's jurisdiction, enhanced advocacy is underway. The Town is advocating to the federal and provincial government for reliable and affordable internet service in rural areas of the Town, a service that has been essential particularly during the pandemic and will be for recovery. In support of both residents and businesses, the Town is also advocating for responsible tourism and partnerships. Parks, trails and conservation areas in Caledon provide ideal recreational and educational day trips for Caledon and Ontario residents, benefitting local businesses that rely on tourism. However, the influx of tourists has led to parking, littering and trespassing issues for the community, among other challenges. The Town has already partnered with Conservation Authorities to better manage the impacts of tourism and is looking to also partner with the Province and tourism associations.

#### *Other Levels of Government Supports*

Both the federal and provincial government provide a range of economic and social supports. Some examples of federal supports available include: Canada Emergency Response Benefit, increase to the Child Tax Benefit, extra time to file income taxes, GST/HST Credit Increase, Canada Emergency Student Benefit, Commercial Rent Assistance, Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (interest free loans), and the Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation offers Mortgage payment deferral.

The provincial government provides various financial supports for businesses, PPE sources, Pandemic Pay for front-line workers, supports geared to vulnerable populations and particularly seniors to reduce social isolation and increase safety and well-being of

seniors. More recently, the Province has provided funding to non-profit organizations and the tourism industry, as well as changed restrictions for child care centres, increasing the number of child care spaces permitted.

As part of the Safe Restart Agreement between the federal and provincial governments, combined funding will be provided to municipalities to manage the financial impacts of COVID-19 and continue to deliver health and social service programs. Additionally, combined funding will be given to child care and early learning settings in order to maintain health and safety. With respect to school boards, the Province will provide funding to help schools reopen safely and further support remote learning. Working with their communities, provinces and territories can also receive funding from the federal government for pandemic-resilient infrastructure projects.

### *Community Supports*

Several foundations and larger organizations made available emergency COVID-19 funding to non-profit community organizations. There are a variety of local non-profit organizations providing food, housing, employment, victim and mental health supports, and personal support services. Many non-profits are also sharing information and resources that individuals can be aware of and access.

Despite the many supports available, there does appear to be a lack of coordinated social interaction and outreach programs. Taking on a proactive role, the Town organized and facilitated a think tank session with community service agencies and the Hills of Headwaters Ontario Health Team to discuss next steps regarding outreach to individuals, particularly older adults. Opportunities for the Town to support the work of the joint initiative are included within the Proposed Actions section of this report.

### **Municipal Best Practices**

Through a review of GTHA municipalities, many continue to be gathering data and forming their recovery plans. A phased approach to economic and social recovery is found throughout several municipalities' frameworks or approaches to recovery. Recovery measures vary from providing supports to local businesses for reopening, activities geared towards certain groups like vulnerable residents, strengthening community partnerships or telephone-based programming for seniors. Majority of municipalities mentioned providing financial relief measures such as tax and bill payment deferrals and/or reduction of fees. Some are even considering accelerating or enhancing initiatives that were already part of their existing strategic plan.

The City of Mississauga recovery plans were approved in July. The economic plan identifies financial mechanisms introduced and looks to reboot the economy through an economic task force, advocacy, additional relief measures, forming partnerships,

enhancing their business portal, 'Buy Local', reviewing planning tools, and assisting with approvals, among others. The economic plan is to then grow from innovation to digital transformation, development objectives to housing affordability. Five industry-specific plans will also be created. The community recovery plan highlights action taken such as community consultations, leveraging financial policy tools, government and community partnerships, maintaining communication with the community and providing virtual programming.

Based on the municipal scan, it was evident that consultation with the local community was and continues to be important from understanding the impacts to providing input on proposed recovery initiatives. At the time of the scan, municipalities were engaged in advocacy efforts for municipal funding, a temporary ban on commercial eviction and support for restaurants through rent relief and flexibility of patio expansion approvals by the municipality.

### **Proposed Actions**

In addition to the actions the Town has taken in response and during the recovery from COVID-19, the Town will continue to further support the Caledon community.

Through the collaborative approach and discussion amongst the CRT members, the Team recommends the Town pursue several initial recovery actions:

#### *Supporting Our Economy*

Small businesses make up the majority of businesses in Caledon, adding character to villages and communities and local economy over time. In the past few years, the Town has taken steps to advance business services to help small businesses grow and expand. As these businesses reopen and re-establish themselves the Town will continue to provide needed services, ensuring Caledon is a place for businesses to locate and consumers to shop.

- Expand Shop Local Campaign

Caledon has often promoted 'buy local' options and most recently provided a 'Shop Local' online map identifying where the public and customers can access local products and services. The Town consulted local and Business Improvement Associations, to confirm support of the initiative and began a social media campaign promoting 'Shop Local' businesses. Beginning in September, online promotion will be further supported by newspaper and magazine advertisements as well as signage and banners on Caledon main streets. Opportunities will continue to be explored to build on the campaign and programming. Through promotion of local businesses, the Town strives to encourage

putting money back into Caledon and the surrounding community, strengthening the local economy.

### *Providing Business Tools for Success*

The Town of Caledon has many services and tools that can help with business recovery needs. As businesses navigate the new realities, the Town will help businesses stay up to date on COVID-19 related information and opportunities.

- Update the COVID-19 Business Resource Webpage

Within the Business Impact Surveys, participants identified the need for up-to-date and relevant information as a priority. Businesses can refer to the Town's COVID-19 Support for Businesses webpage for up to date COVID-19 programs and supports in one place such as webinars. As more information and resources from the Government of Canada, Ontario Government, Region of Peel and business organizations become available, the Town will monitor and update the webpage as well as the Town's Business Newsletter.

- Industry/Sector/Village Discussions

Businesses of certain industries may be able to relate to some of the challenges experienced with safely reopening. Working with industry associations and the Region of Peel, the Town will organize and host online industry chats to help businesses connect and share ideas and resources amongst the industry or sector. Potential industry discussions include tourism, manufacturing, retail, and food service. Economic Development staff also intends to work with Ward Councillors to organize village tours and meetings with local businesses to better understand their needs and to better promote available economic development services.

In May 2020, Caledon began to implement Caledon 2020-2030 Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy provides support for entrepreneurship, small business, business retention and attraction. Many of the actions noted in the Strategy include programs to connect, communicate and assist businesses. Aspects of the plan have been included above and others may be fast-tracked to help Caledon businesses move from response to recovery and grow.

In particular from the Strategy, the CRT identifies the Bolton Revitalization Plan which looks at how to help the Bolton community grow, as an action that will assist in COVID-19 recovery.

*Empowering Community Organizations*

Non-profit organizations are providing programs and services at the local level, assisting the Caledon community in recovering from the pandemic. The Town can provide financial and communications supports to such organizations to help their funding go further and reach clients in need.

- Expansion of the Municipal, Agricultural and Community Grant Program (MACG)

The MACG program intends to support organizations with goals and objectives that support the Council Work Plan. This may include organizations that plan events, enrich lives of Caledon residents or support activities that serve the Caledon community. The Town can further support community organizations through COVID-19 recovery by permanently increasing MACG base funding to \$140,000 for 2020 and subsequent years. The funding will help account for the impact of COVID-19 on organizations, such as extra costs incurred due to the pandemic or reduced funding capabilities. Funding can be increased to \$240,000 for 2021 when many externally provided community grants and funding end, and phase out the additional funding increase by 2024. Modifications will be made to the MACG application and evaluation.

A separate report, Staff Report 2020-0194 has been provided to Council for consideration as part of the August 25, 2020 Council Agenda to further discuss and recommend changes for approval to the MACG program and request funding approval.

In addition, the 2020 Community Green Fund is recommending in Staff Report 2020-0201, for 2020 program funding deadlines for project completion be extended from July 2021 to December 2021 due to delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Promote Community Affiliate Registration

With sports and recreation activities on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic and financial impacts to the community, many of the Town's recreation affiliates have lower participant registration. There is an opportunity for the Town to develop print and social media advertising the registration timelines of affiliates. Promotion through the Town's various communication channels will help encourage participation addressing social isolation and bring about increased revenue for community groups.

- Reduce Affiliate Rental Rates

Sports and recreation affiliates of the Town pay to rent Town fields, pools and arenas. However, these organizations are unable to utilize the facilities and spaces to its full capacity due to provincial restrictions on gatherings. Reducing affiliate rental fees by 50% for the period August 4, 2020 to April 12, 2021 will help decrease the financial impact on

the organization. To obtain the reduced rate, affiliate organizations will provide proof of the benefit being passed on to their participant groups. An example of the benefit could include but is not limited to reduced/eliminated registration or other fees, reduced required fundraising, or reduced/eliminated fees for development. This will result in a total estimated loss of \$316,990 in revenue. For the 2020 fiscal year, the estimated loss is \$166,770 and will be funded from the operating contingency reserve if the Town overall is in a deficit position for the 2020 fiscal year. For the 2021 fiscal year, it is recommended that the estimated loss of \$150,220 be funded from the operating contingency reserve.

While the CRT recommends taking these immediate steps to assist community affiliates, upon addressing impacts from the pandemic, there is an opportunity for the Town to further strengthen and support the Community Affiliate Program and the positive work of these organizations. The Town can continue to enhance relations, working with affiliates to tackle pre-COVID challenges.

It is recommended that the Town's Fees By-law be updated to reflect these lower rates for pool and arena rentals by the affiliate groups.

#### *Supporting Community Connectedness*

Despite physical distancing and gathering restrictions, the Town can help residents maintain connections to school, work, family and friends. To reduce social isolation and maintain community connectedness, the Town can support the engagement and outreach efforts of community agencies.

- Expand Visiting Library Service (VLS)

Suspended since March 2020, the Caledon Public Library's VLS program had volunteers delivering books to homebound seniors. An expanded version of the program could be introduced to provide drop-off and pick-up library services to Caledon residents who are unable to visit their local library branch due to COVID-19 or other challenges. Expanding visiting services will help reach out and deliver services to isolated individuals including homebound seniors living in Caledon. While provincial physical distancing measures are in effect, the visiting nature of the program may differ. Additionally, online library services are available, but some may not have reliable internet or technology to access online services. Library staff will coordinate the selection of materials and volunteers and explore partnerships with volunteer organizations that provide similar programs such as Caledon Meals on Wheels. Working with external agencies, the VLS can collaborate to distribute additional resources as needed. Town staff can provide referrals to the service and assist in raising general awareness of the VLS. To inform isolated residents that the service is available and to retain volunteer support, specialized promotion and advertising will be required.

- Community Connectivity Kits

In addition to having the Library's hot spot program, the CPL can establish a referral program for vulnerable residents to access a connectivity kit. Each kit would include one hotspot and one laptop. In order to offer 10 kits, new hotspots and laptops would need to be purchased. Based on referrals from Town staff and local service providers the Library can loan the resources for one week. Resources and training will be provided to support the program and address potential challenges with using technology. Bridging the digital divide, the initiative will provide resources for vulnerable residents to stay connected. Residents without access to these technologies would be able to connect with friends, family, service providers, health care professionals, etc. in the event of isolation and physical distancing measures. To help these residents quickly, it is recommended that the initial purchase of the kits and operating costs for 2020 be funded from the Library's 2020 salary gapping in the amount of \$7,700. For 2021 budget, an unavoidable budget increase of \$6,360 for the operating costs of these connectivity kits is recommended to be funded from the Town's Operating Contingency Reserve.

- Partner and promote Social Isolation Project – Older Adults

Caledon's Social Isolation Project is a culmination of community outreach and information outreach initiatives led by individual community organizations within the Hills of Headwaters Ontario Health Team aimed at reducing social isolation among older adult residents. These initiatives work to engage residents and build awareness of available programs and services. For instance, the Dufferin Area Family Health Team's Tapestry Program brings together volunteers and health care providers to build comprehensive health plans that consider the lifestyle of residents and help them obtain customized social supports to stay healthier longer. The proposed Gatekeeper program led by Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Peel Dufferin equips community members with resources and information to identify vulnerable seniors/individuals and assist getting them connected. With the projects managed by community organizations, the Town can collaborate by developing promotion materials, marketing opportunities through communication channels and assisting in the recruitment of volunteers. Further, there is an opportunity for volunteers to be located at Caledon recreation centres and libraries.

- COVID-19 Friendly Community Events

Community organizations and associations have expressed interested in launching COVID-19 friendly community events. The Town, through the Office of the Mayor, Ward Councillors and Recreation Staff, will explore options to partner, promote, or fund COVID-19 friendly community events. Funding would be drawn from the Mayor's Office public relations budget, previously used for community events such as Coffee with Council. For example, the Town could partner with local fair boards to host drive-in movies on their sites. Residents can refer to the Town's online Events Calendar for an up to date schedule

of virtual and in-person community events. As information about upcoming events is submitted, the Town will continue to update the calendar.

*Increasing Access to Information*

Access to information is critical for community recovery. The amount of information available to residents can be overwhelming. Financial means and internet connectivity can also present a barrier to accessing information. Through several tactics, the Town can help ensure residents have the tools they need to access information, know what support programs are available, who to call and how to access various services.

- Eliminate overdue library fines

Particularly during economic downturns demand for library services grows, but overdue fines can act as a barrier to library use. Those who cannot pay their fines, may discontinue their use of library materials. In alignment with a recent trend among public libraries, the Caledon Public Library proposes to eliminate overdue library fines for all residents and user groups (not included replacement of lost or damaged items). The measure will increase library usage and access to information and services. The calculation of fines will be deactivated in the Library software system. This will result in a loss of \$30,000 revenue, to be proposed in the Library's 2021 budget. For 2020, the Town's Fees By-law will be updated to reflect no library fines will be charged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Promote Ontario 211 Service

Supported by the Government of Canada, Government of Ontario and the United Way of Canada, the existing Ontario 211 telephone service provides callers with one-stop information resource and referrals to local community, social, health and government programs and services. Available to anyone in Canada, residents are guided to appropriate agencies to access needed supports. The Town can develop and implement a communications plan to raise awareness of the Ontario 211 service. This service may be especially helpful to residents experiencing internet connectivity or access to technology challenges.

As per the Caledon Council Work Plan, staff will work with the Region of Peel to promote mental health resources.

- Waive Town of Caledon Marriage Licence Administration Fee

Due to COVID-19, the Province of Ontario has extended the expiry date of marriage licences issued before March 13, 2020 and waived the \$75.00 fee for the issuance of replacement licences. A Town of Caledon fee of \$50.00 is still required for issuing the replacement licence. While the chances of having to issue a replacement licence are low

(few licences were issued in Caledon in 2020 before the pandemic), Staff are recommending to Council that this \$50.00 fee be waived should a client request a replacement licence. The Fees By-law is recommended to be updated accordingly.

- New User Fees

As part of continuous service delivery improvements, the Town is implementing an online portal for the sale and issuance of property tax certificates. This solution will facilitate the purchase of online tax certificates to a wider audience with less effort and an improved turnaround time for requests. The service will be more convenient to tax certificate purchasers who purchase tax certificates to ascertain the tax status of a property, typically due to a sale or refinance of a property. This centralized portal will be used by lawyers, financial institutions and residents to quickly obtain the information they need from their home or office. Currently, tax certificates are only available by making a written request and the process of issuing a tax certificate is onerous in terms of staff time to facilitate the process. It is recommended that a new user fee be adopted for Online Tax Certificates of \$75.00. This would cover the Town's costs of issuing the tax certificate as well as the \$10.50 fee paid to TeraNet, the host of the online tax certificate portal. Currently, the Town offers a rush tax certificate of \$85.00 with a turnaround time of up to two days. The new online tax certificate will typically be delivered in minutes to the purchaser at a lessor cost than the current process.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town has increased the number of wire payments it accepts to pay large invoices to the Town for things such as development charges and planning fees so less applicants need to leave their homes and businesses. The Town's financial institution charges \$15.00 for it to process an electronic payment to the Town. To recover this additional cost, it is recommended that the Town add a Wire Payment Fee of \$15.00 to the user fee by-law.

### **Next Steps**

Upon Council approval, staff will work with community partners and organizations to implement the abovementioned recovery actions. Updates and plan progress will be provided to Council as required.

The CRT will continue to meet and check-in regularly. In addition, staff will continue to consult with community stakeholders as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. Changes to the social and economic needs in Caledon may warrant additional Town action in support of the community. The Team will bring forward proposed actions as appropriate.

With the proposed Community Recovery measures in place, Caledon residents and business can have confidence that the community will not only continue on its path to be

the most livable and sustainable community, but will develop its economic potential and strengthen social ties as a resilient community.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Upon the initial response to the pandemic the Town waived penalties and interest for property tax payments due to the pandemic and deferred 2020 tax due dates which will result in \$1,186,530 unfavourable 2020 budget variance.

Many items in the Community Recovery Plan can be achieved using existing Town budgets and resources.

An increase in funding for the Municipal, Agricultural and Community Grants (MACG) program to support COVID-19 recovery in the community will be discussed and requested in Staff Report 2020-0194.

Staff are recommending to purchase Library Community Connectivity Kits and provide this service to our vulnerable residents as soon as possible. This project is in the amount of \$7,700 and is to be funded from the Library's projected 2020 operating surplus related to salary gapping. For 2021 budget, the ongoing operating costs \$6,360 of these connectivity kits are recommended to be funded from the Town's Operating Contingency Reserve. Library late return fines will also continue to be waived throughout the remainder of 2020 as Library services have been disrupted by the pandemic required closures. The Town's Fees By-law is recommended to be updated to reflect the elimination of late return fees.

Reducing Affiliate Rental fees in recreation is estimated to result in lost revenues of \$316,990 for the period August 4, 2020 to April 12, 2021. Loss of revenue for 2020 of \$166,770 will be funded from the operating contingency reserve (current balance is \$6,085,489.56) if the Town overall is in a shortfall for the 2020 fiscal year. For the 2021 budget, it is recommended that the loss of \$150,220 be funded from the Town's operating contingency reserve.

Costs associated with the waiving of marriage licence will be \$50 each however staff estimate that client demand for this service will be minimal (\$150-\$300) and will be assumed within the Service Caledon budget.

The new user fees for tax certificates and wire payment are not expected to result in any significant budget impacts.

Budget for 2021 recovery activities will be brought forward through the Town's budget process.

**COUNCIL WORK PLAN**

**Sustainable Growth:**

- Complete a renewed Economic Development Strategy with a particular focus on employment land, small business support and the role of municipal staff
- Bolton downtown revitalization (including re-zoning to allow for more mixed-use buildings)

**Connected Community:**

- Enhance high-speed internet connectivity
- Actively promote tourism including our cultural and village main street assets
- Seek opportunities to connect Caledon villages to help bridge the rural/urban divide
- Promote community enrichment through support of local groups, enhances partnerships and events

**Improved Service Delivery**

- Promote locally provided mental health services

**ATTACHMENTS**

Schedule A: Memo - COVID-19 Business Impact Survey

Schedule B: Memo - CCCT – Survey Results

Schedule C: COVID-19 Business Impact Survey # 2 Results

Schedule D: COVID-19 Resident Impact Survey Results