

CORPORATE REPORT

To: Fraser Valley Regional District Board

Date: 2020-03-18

From: Jennifer Kinneman, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

File No:

Subject: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Preparedness

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Commission of information pertaining the novel coronavirus and pandemic planning. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

BACKGROUND

Health authorities around the world are closely monitoring the ongoing outbreak of a novel coronavirus, called SARS-CoV-2. SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus that originated in animals, but has jumped to humans. This virus causes the disease known as COVID-19.

COVID-19 was first identified in patients in Wuhan, China, causing severe forms of viral pneumonia and leading to death in some cases. It is believed that the virus is primarily spread between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet), and through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is possible to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, however this is not believed to be the main way the virus spreads.

Data on COVID-19 changes hourly; however, at the time of report writing, there were 121,564 total global cases confirmed and 4,373 deaths (3.6%). Of those deaths, 3,046 (70%) occurred in Mainland

China. It is important to note that of the 121,564 confirmed global cases, 66,239 have already recovered (54.5%).

Canada has recorded 93 confirmed cases and 1 death. According to the World Health Organization, COVID-19's death rate increases with age, with the highest mortality rate of 21.9% occurring among people over 80 years of age. Those with underlying medical issues such as respiratory and heart conditions are among those at highest risk. There are currently no vaccines available to protect against SARS-CoV-2 infection. For those who have contracted COVID-19, there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended; however, most people generally develop mild respiratory symptoms and fever and recover. Approximately 80% of laboratory-confirmed patients had mild to moderate disease.

While it is important to note that the current risk of contracting COVID-19 in the Fraser Valley is low, and most patients are likely to recover from COVID-19, organizations like the FVRD should be prepared for the potential business continuity effects of a pandemic.

DISCUSSION

In 2010, the FVRD prepared a Pandemic Plan as a result of the awareness raised by the 2003 SARS outbreak and the 2009 novel influenza A (H1N1) outbreak. FVRD's Pandemic Plan identifies some of the potential business impacts of pandemics, including risks to service provision, supply chain disruption, and staff absenteeism.

To ensure the FVRD's preparedness for a pandemic related to COVID-19, the Emergency Management Executive Committee (EMEC) is currently updating the 2010 Pandemic Plan and monitoring messaging from the Fraser Health Authority and the Province of British Columbia (see attachments).

The EMEC is identifying ways to mitigate risks in the event the FVRD becomes impacted by COVID-19. Measures to deliver services through alternate means will be considered, as well as staffing considerations in the event of widespread absenteeism.

Proactive measures are also currently underway to keep staff informed of the facts surrounding this novel virus and how disease can be prevented. Health Canada has published the following recommendations, which are considered best practice for COVID-19 as well as:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- stay home if you are sick
- when coughing or sneezing:
 - cover your mouth and nose with your arm or tissues to reduce the spread of germs
 - immediately dispose of any tissues you have used into the garbage as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards
- avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care centres if you are sick

COST

There are currently no costs associated with pandemic planning and preparedness. To support advanced planning work, key staff members will be making pandemic planning a priority in their current work plans. The FVRD will continue to monitor any impacts and make adjustments as needed to ensure appropriate service delivery and staffing are maintained.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 has elevated the need for proactive pandemic planning. FVRD staff will continue to monitor and work with the Fraser Health Authority and the Province of British Columbia to mitigate business continuity impacts should a pandemic occur.