

Updates on Pre-Pandemic Council Directives

Date: April 14, 2021
To: Executive Committee
From: City Manager
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report is part of the City Manager's regular updates to Council on the City's COVID-19 response, recovery and rebuild actions. The information should be considered in the context of the pandemic, which is currently in a critical phase with an ongoing Emergency declared by the Provincial government until May 2021 at the earliest.

The City Manager's October 2020 COVID-19 status report ([EX17.1](#)) identified that there were over 600 outstanding directives from Committees and City Council from the start of this Council term as tracked by the City Clerk's Office.

Over the past year, as resources and capacity allow, staff have continued to address outstanding pre-pandemic directives from City Council. Due to staff reassignments and shifting and emerging priorities, such as the implementation of a vaccination strategy, online service delivery, and the implementation of programs to address critical social and economic challenges, work on many pre-pandemic directives had been temporarily paused.

The City Manager worked with operating areas to review the outstanding directives and identify actions to address the backlog. This report provides a status update including information that many directives have either been responded to, accelerated, or will be addressed in the coming Council cycles, with only a small percentage still paused until further information is available, or current COVID-19 related challenges permit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. Executive Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from this report. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

The City Manager, in his “Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto” report to City Council in October 2020 identified that a backlog of outstanding Council directives grew during 2020 due to the redeployment of staff to focus on COVID-19 response, restart and recovery initiatives and the deferral of several Council cycles between March and June 2020. The City Manager indicated that staff would review this backlog and bring forward relevant information and updates to Council.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EX17.1>.

COMMENTS

This report provides information on the status of pre-pandemic Council directives, first raised in the City Manager's October 2020 Recovery Update report.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Manager has provided eight comprehensive reports to City Council on the City's COVID-19 Response and Recovery activities. The City Manager's *Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto* report to City Council in October 2020 ([EX17.1](#)) identified a backlog of outstanding Council directives for this term of Council from the first six months of the pandemic. One reason for the backlog was the deferral of several Council cycles between March and June 2020. Council resumed a full cycle of meetings, including all Standing Committees and Community Councils, as of July 2020.

Recently, the City Manager's March 2021 *COVID-19 Recovery and Rebuild update* ([EX22.1](#)), provided information on how some strategic and policy-related pre-pandemic directives had been triaged amidst the changing circumstances arising from the pandemic. For example, some prior directives are now captured, or will be addressed as part of recent Council directives for a review of the City's engagement strategies. Other directives were paused and are being reviewed against capacity and resources as the City continues to focus on urgent COVID-19 related priorities and actions.

Many of the items from the backlog have been reported to Committee and Council through the end of 2020 and will continue through upcoming cycles this year. Staff continue to assess the backlog and leverage available resources to advance past directives while also meeting Council's COVID-19 response and recovery priorities.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Council Directions

The directives that were reviewed for this report were:

- from the start of the Council term (December 2018) until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Post March 2020 decisions and directives were primarily pandemic-related or recent enough that they are not yet overdue;
- made in a pre-pandemic context, at a time when staff and Council could not have anticipated the challenges and ways in which COVID-19 would require a shift in City resources, focus and investments;
- those that included a request for a report-back in the recommendations; and

- strategic and policy-related and not transactional or part of regular (i.e. annual) reporting, or where delegated authority would apply, such as directives from Community Council as these will be reported through future cycles as agendas permit.

Review Findings

The outcomes of the review indicate:

- work on the majority of directives from Council and Standing and Executive Committees has continued, even amidst challenges and delays brought on by the pandemic;
- several of the outstanding directives identified in October 2020 have since come forward to Committee and Council, including through the 2021 budget process;
- many items that were delayed in 2020 are scheduled to come forward to Council in 2021. Where information on delayed directives, or a new reporting date, has already been communicated to Council, those updates are not included in this report;
- some pre-pandemic directives have been superseded by recovery actions in response to a changes in circumstances created by the pandemic. For example, economic development directives that were made pre-pandemic and were paused, now require review against where staff and resources were directed to address urgent economic supports. The pre-pandemic directives will now be considered with a COVID-19 lens and, in some cases, consider more recent directions on economic recovery, or will be advanced with updated timelines; and
- some items remain outstanding. A review by the service areas include commentary on many of these items and is provided in Attachment 1 of this report.

Impact of COVID-19 and Priority Actions

In the course of reviewing outstanding Council and Committee directives, staff also identified where work on a number of directives was accelerated to support COVID-19 priorities including responding to the needs of residents, communities and businesses, and to support the City's financial sustainability. Recent reports to Council, including the City Manager's Recovery Updates, included examples of work that has been accelerated such as:

- actions related to poverty reduction, including increased supports for food security, mental health supports, emergency child care, housing and homelessness and alternative approaches to deliver services such as income and employment supports;
- new and enhanced programs and partnerships to support business and culture sectors including virtual support programs;
- digitizing City services and meetings including City Council and Committees, remote program delivery, moving staff to work from home, and increased public posting of information and online tools and applications;
- transportation, including expanding cycling infrastructure, surface transit and enabling ActiveTO, CurbTO and CaféTO, were accelerated to respond to physical distancing and public health measures; and,
- increased intergovernmental coordination including funding to manage fiscal pressures and supports for the City's COVID-19 response and recovery.

Updates on Remaining Pre-Pandemic Directives

Attachment 1 includes status updates for a number of pre-pandemic directives that have not yet come forward to Council and are not currently anticipated for completion in 2021. The updates include information about the impact of the pandemic on this work, how the work will be advanced, and where staff have identified opportunities to integrate pre-COVID-19 directions with recovery-related directions. This short list of outstanding directives will continue to be reviewed and considered against capacity and resources requirements of responding to the pandemic.

Where possible, the updates include information on how circumstances arising from public health measures and potential long term impacts of the pandemic will be considered by staff in future updates and recommendations to Council.

Attachment 1 is organized by the following categories:

Licensing and Enforcement:

- With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) resources were redirected to urgent COVID-19 enforcement efforts, the digitization of licensing administration, and to support housing initiatives such as short-term rental, multi-tenant housing and RentSafeTO. Updates provided in the attachment identify pandemic impacts and related delays.

General Government:

- City staff have worked to ensure City operations continue to meet public health requirements. While resources such as Corporate Security and the City Clerk's Office have moved to support the functioning of government through the pandemic, updates are provided where delays on other work are indicated.

Economic Development:

- A number of Divisions, led by Economic Development and Culture (EDC), are focussed on local and economic support and the City's economic recovery from the pandemic, including responding to Council directions made since the start of the emergency. Updates on delays to pre-pandemic economic development related directives are provided in the attachment.

Community Development:

- The City has put an urgent focus on community development initiatives as part of COVID-19 response and recovery. Information on the many initiatives that support this work has been reported through Standing Committees to Council and summarized in the City Manager's reports on COVID-19 response and recovery. Pre-pandemic directives have been advanced or accelerated with many items coming forward to Council in 2021. Updates provided in the attachment indicate work that will be resumed when public health restrictions are lifted.

Planning and Housing:

- The majority of planning and housing related directives have been advanced or accelerated where urgently required to respond to the pandemic. Some items are delayed from 2020 but are coming forward in 2021.

Infrastructure and Environment:

- Included are updates on the Electric Vehicle Strategy, area-specific flooding and waste diversion initiatives.

Governance:

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Manager's Office was advancing work on directives including those from the Special Committee on Governance. At the onset of the pandemic, the majority of staff from the City Manager's Office was redirected to support COVID-19 response and recovery including coordinating the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild. Governance updates are provided in Attachment 1 along with information on one outstanding item related to the request from City Council to the City Manager for information on compensation for Members of Council. This was scheduled to come forward to City Council in spring 2020 but was delayed due to other COVID-19 related priorities. The comparative jurisdictional information on compensation is included as an appendix to Attachment 1.

Financial:

- The focus of Finance & Treasury Services in 2020 was to manage the multi-year deficits and other financial risks posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Updates are provided on two items which include plans to report on this work.

Managing Directives Going Forward

The City Clerk provided the list of outstanding Council directives for the period of December 2018 to March 2020 for this review. Next steps will include Divisional Staff providing information to the City Clerk's Office on the reports that responded to past directives and identifying in future reports which directive the report addresses. Divisional staff will also conduct a regular review of the remaining outstanding directives with status updates to the appropriate Standing Committee, Executive Committee or as part of the City Manager's future Recovery update reports. The City Manager will also be exploring how members of City Council and Committees can receive information in a timely manner on the resource impacts, staff capacity and timing estimates to achieve future directives. This may include consideration of the directive against other work or fiscal pressures, new or emerging priorities, future impacts of the pandemic or other emergencies, and divergent or similar directives. This type of report would be undertaken where the directive might result in a significant shift in policy, require substantial resources or redeployment of staff, and where staff had not had the opportunity to review the motion or directive against these considerations in order to provide their advice and recommendations to Council.

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SIGNATURE

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Attachments

Attachment 1: Pre-Pandemic Directives Updates and Appendix: Comparison of
Councillor Compensation - Jurisdictional Scan