



# **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC PLAN**

*March 2020*

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## Municipality of the County of Inverness Pandemic Plan

### INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing a Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic as indicated by the World Health Organization (WHO). The goal of the Municipality of the County of Inverness (Municipality) is to ensure the continued operation of the local government, including our Small Options/Senior's Homes, to serve and assist the public. The Municipality will work closely with the Nova Scotia Departments of Health and Wellness, Environment, Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), EMO Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Community Housing Authority.

***The Municipality's main priority with this Plan is the continued and effective operation of our local municipal government and the health and safety of our staff, local business, community organizations and residents.***

## **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

The purpose of this Plan is to support the continuation and/or reinstatement of critical government functions during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Plan fosters business continuity by outlining the action Plan and processes to be followed by each department as they work toward the resumption of normal business operations.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In preparing this Plan it is assumed that the Municipality will experience significant absenteeism as a result of the pandemic.

When preparing this Plan, it was considered that:

- The virus may spread rapidly leaving little or no time to prepare;
- The pandemic may be widespread with simultaneous outbreaks;
- There may be shortages of healthcare, emergency, and essential services personnel due to illness and absenteeism;
- There may be severe disruptions in essential services; and
- There may be shortages of equipment and supplies.

## PLAN ACTIVATION

The Chief Administrative Officer or designate shall have the authority to activate the Pandemic Plan, suspend the delivery of services and/or redeploy staff, as necessary.

In this event, existing staff may be asked to assist in areas of responsibility that are different from their regular staff assignment.

When the Plan is activated, the following organizational changes may be made.

1. The Chief Administrative Officer will continue to be responsible for directing the Municipality on a day-to-day basis in conjunction with Council and Senior Staff who will be meeting regularly to closely monitor the situation, if it is safe to do so.

## CRITICAL MUNICIPALITY OPERATIONS

### Intention:

It is our intention to conduct the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with existing policies and operating procedures to the extent possible.

1. Community use of buildings
  - a. Inverness County Literacy Office – 16 Railway Street, Inverness
    - Closed to the public.
  - b. Municipal Office – 375 Main Street, Port Hood
    - Closed to the public.
  - c. Infrastructure & Emergency Services Facility – 15109 Highway 19, Inverness
    - Closed to the public.
  - d. Kenloch Transfer Station – 420 West Lake Ainslie, Inverness
    - Kenloch Transfer Station is a vital service and will remain open. We will ask our residents and clients to respect social distancing rules. When visiting the office, we will ask residents to please respect social distancing rules of staying 6 feet or 2 metres away from others.
2. All Recreation and Cultural Programs offered through the Municipality will be cancelled and rescheduled, if possible, at a later date.
3. Foyer Pere Fiset, Inverary Manor, Port Hood Small Options and Koster Huis are closed to visitors.
4. All 'Non-Essential' meetings will be cancelled. Council Meetings will only be held on an 'As-Need' basis, and may be done using teleconferencing.
5. All 'Organization-Related' Travel outside the Municipality will be cancelled. Only the most essential travel, as determined by the CAO, will be permitted.
6. All Contractors who provide services to the Municipality will be expected to follow the guidelines and policies of the Municipality as it pertains the COVID 19 Controls and Measures document; and organizational Pandemic Plan.
7. Residents and customers will be encouraged to make payments online, through electronic bank transfers, through Paymentus or by mail.
8. Courier services will be directed, via posted signage, how to arrange for delivery.
9. Disinfecting of Municipal Buildings and Equipment in use will be a priority; and staff will be re-deployed across the organization as required.
10. All Staff will be provided with the applicable safety equipment and materials required to do their jobs appropriately.
11. Our Municipality will cross coordinate with other Municipalities as required on EMO measures, backup staff for water treatment facilities, etc.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

1. Community members and groups are strongly encouraged to follow all Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Recommendations.
2. It is strongly recommended that groups suspend all meetings, events, gatherings, meals, recreational activities, etc. for the foreseeable future.
3. Residents are encouraged to adhere to the 14-day self-isolation requirement, not only for themselves and families, but the population as a whole; and to be proactive and part of the solution, not the problem.
4. If community group owned buildings are required to be open, as a minimum, provide hand sanitizers; and follow strict disinfecting measures for all common surfaces.
5. Residents are encouraged not to get persuaded by “fake news”. Please rely on traditional news media as well as Provincial and Federal Resources for correct information.
6. Practice Social Distancing rules of staying 6 feet or 2 metres away from others.
7. Residents will be encouraged to think of others as you maybe a carrier and not know it; not have any symptoms; but cause hardship on those who are elderly, who have underlying health conditions, or have a compromised immune system. This is why self-isolation is so important.
8. Connect and reach out to your neighbours: as self-isolation increases, residents need to find new ways to stay connected and check in on one another for our physical and mental wellbeing. Share phone numbers and stay in touch.
9. Support vulnerable or isolated people: different groups in our communities are at increased risk and social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages. There are things you can do like volunteering for local support services or donating to food banks to help.
10. Residents will be encouraged to use the outdoors for their individual fitness and recreation needs.



## COMMUNICATIONS

### Communication Goal

The Municipality's goal for communications is to inform our partners about the Plan and any related alterations to the Municipality and its operations. "Partners" refers to any community organizations, public agencies, schools, private businesses and residents that the Municipality engages with.

### Communications Priorities/Goals

Partners are confident that the Municipality is well prepared for a pandemic.

Partners are aware of the ways to get information, ask questions and receive clarification about the Plan.

Partners are highly satisfied at all times with the amount of information they are receiving and about the status of programs and services.

### Strategic Considerations

The Municipality will rely on the advice and guidance of our provincial and local public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation. The priority is to keep local municipal government operations functioning as long as it is safe to do so.

### Key Messages

- The Plan is completely open to Council, staff, residents, and the community for their information, to ask questions and to receive clarification about the Plan.
- During a pandemic, the Municipality will follow the advice and guidance of federal, provincial and local public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation.
- The priority during a pandemic is to keep local municipal government and Inverness County Homes Corporation operations functioning as long as it is safe to do so. Non-essential services may be restricted in order to focus on providing the most necessary services to our residents.
- An action Plan will be communicated to the Municipality's personnel and partners to support our priorities.

## COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

Communicate to all Council and employees in March 2020 to inform them about the Plan.

- Share information with community organizations, small options/senior's homes, service providers, media;
- Participate in interagency pandemic Planning;
- Publicize general restrictions;
- Post information on website and social media about relevant information to residents.

## PANDEMIC PLAN FLOW CHART – ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

**Pandemic Plan Flowchart Priority:** Keep local government operations functioning as long as it is safe to do so.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Plan is to support the continuation and/or reinstatement of critical municipal operations during a pandemic.

### **Chief Administrative Officer:**

- Activates the Plan;
- Maintains municipal core services.

### **Communications Specialist:**

- Spearheads information sharing about the Plan with Council and Staff, public and media;
- Handles media inquiries related to the Plan.

### **Departments:**

- Inform and update employees about the Plan;
- Provide support (training, supplies, etc.) for infection prevention strategies;
- Complete assigned responsibilities within the Plan;
- Collect and report required data, such as staff absenteeism reports;
- Direct staff members to sources of coronavirus information;
- Refer media inquiries on the pandemic to the CAO or Communications Specialist.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Operations**

- Lead the Occupational Health and Safety components of the Plan;
- Conduct all government operations, including cleaning, maintenance, construction and transportation, in accordance with the Plan;
- Ensure the completion of assigned duties such as specific cleaning tasks, disinfecting of hard surfaces;
- Reschedule support staff to maximize the delivery of essential cleaning and transportation services during the pandemic;
- Ensure that facilities are provided with required cleaning materials and sanitation supplies and equipment;
- Monitor and address Occupational Health and Safety issues associated with the

pandemic;

- Work with departments and outside agencies to continuously update pandemic information as it becomes available;
- Provide training to appropriate staff in specific sanitation strategies in relation to infection prevention; and
- Schedule staff meetings, if safe to do so, to provide information about department continuity Plan. Managers/Supervisors hold meetings if necessary, to make sure all staff receive thorough and up-to-date messages.

### **Human Resources**

- Director's will monitor staff absenteeism and respond accordingly to the Human Resources Specialist;
- Confer with employees on coronavirus related issues, such as sick leave provisions;
- Modify staff hiring and replacement practices as necessary;
- Maintain updated casual and substitute list to assist with the hiring of replacement staff for affected employees;
- Work with supervisors, administrators and/or health care professionals to support return to work Plan for employees; and
- Schedule staff meetings, if safe to do so, to provide information about department continuity Plan. Hold meetings if necessary, to make sure all staff receive thorough and up-to-date messages.

### **Finance**

- Arrange necessary funding for supplies and services;
- Monitor and revise payroll, purchasing and contracting activities to maintain critical services;
- Track and report on the costs associated with the Plan;
- Recommend necessary budget adjustments associated with the extra costs incurred as a result of the pandemic;
- Notify vendors of pertinent pandemic information;
- Monitor supplies and services necessary for required operations; and
- Schedule staff meetings, via teleconferencing, to provide information about department continuity Plan. Managers/Supervisors hold meetings if necessary, to make sure all staff receive thorough and up-to-date messages.

### **County of Inverness Municipal Housing Corporation**

The Municipality's small options/senior's homes - Inverary Manor, Foyer Pere Fiset, Port Hood Small Options and Koster Huis - recognize that COVID-19 is a specific hazard that could

disrupt the operations of the facilities, the health care system and society as a whole. As such all facilities have Plan in place to ensure that staff in the facility are equipped with the knowledge, skill and resources to respond.

The goals of a response are as follows:

1. To minimize serious illness and overall deaths in the facility.
2. To minimize disruption to essential Long-Term Care services in the facility as a result of an outbreak.
3. To contribute to an integrated health system response at the local, district and provincial level.

This facility Plan has been designed as one aspect of the provincial, district and local response.

## EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

The Municipality recognizes and endorses the need for staff to safeguard their safety and wellness and that of their families.

1. If Employees are sick, they are to stay home until they no longer have any symptoms.
2. If Employees have a fever, they are required to stay home at least 72 hours after the fever has gone away.
3. For the foreseeable future, sick leave notes will not be required.
4. Full time and part time employees will continue to be paid salary and benefits, even if some part time employees are not required to report to work on a given day.
5. If an employee runs out of sick leave, they will be asked to discuss it with their Supervisor.
6. All staff will have been advised, "If in the unlikely event a member of their family becomes infected, or if they come in contact with someone who has been infected, they are to a) call 811 b) self-quarantine themselves for a minimal of 14 days and c) advise their supervisor so that we can take the appropriate steps to advise other staff members of what they might need to do.
7. All staff will be advised, "If they, or a family member who lives in their household, have been out of Country, they are to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days."
8. All staff will be asked to adhere to social distancing guidelines and to stay a minimum of 6 feet or 2 metres away from your fellow staff, where possible and practical.
9. The Municipality understands the predicament that some families may be in as a result of schools closed. That said, we are a local government and some services are essential. Staff should make a request for annual leave and sick leave as per normal policy.
10. With respect to people working from home, only a small number of employees in the organization can work effectively from home. Requests will be considered on a case by case basis by the CAO, but we would ask staff to consider the needs of their fellow employees in the workplace, before making the request.
11. It is recognized that these are very stressful times for our employees as it is for the general public. We would encourage staff to reach out for help in the event they need it. They will be encouraged to reach out to those who they feel comfortable with in and outside the organization, as well as the CAO. As interaction with the public is expected to be minimal, employees working in an office environment can choose to wear relaxed clothing.

12. All staff will be encouraged to take their breaks, and to take their lunch breaks; and where necessary Management will be encouraged to be flexible with and be cognizant of all employee needs.
13. Staff will be encouraged to take their own precautions of washing hands, social distancing, using safety gear as applicable, etc.

Additional detailed information regarding employee support may be found in **Appendix 2**.

## HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Prior history indicates that there will be second and third waves of the pandemic. While these later waves may be of variable severity, their impact may be reduced by the use of vaccines if developed. Consequently, the Municipality will have to continuously re-evaluate its status in the key areas of staffing. The Municipality will also have to quickly regroup and redeploy staff in order to maintain critical government services.

The Municipality shall also enact Plan for the replacement of employees on sick leave. This may entail modified hiring practices as staffing priorities are identified during the reinstatement of services. In keeping with the collaborative and dynamic nature of the Municipality's Plan, continuous monitoring and adjustments will be completed in consultation with health care professionals.

A third priority in human resources management will be support for employee re-entry to the workplace following prolonged absence due to illness.



## CONTINUITY PLAN

**Administrators are responsible to prepare detailed continuity Plan for their specific functions. The following is a broad outline of continuity Planning for critical government functions.**

### Administration

<b>Function</b>	<b>Model of Service Delivery</b>	<b>Continuity Strategies</b>
Follow duties as described in the FOIPOP Act in the event of an application under that Act	CAO	Maintain service with backup provided by the CAO
Routine communications	Communications Specialist	Maintain service with backup provided by the CAO and other assigned staff
Communications necessary as a result of the pandemic	Communications Specialist	Maintain service with backup provided by the various assigned staff
Update the website with information as directed	Communications Specialist	Maintain service with backup provided by IT Services
Maintain core municipal services such as Police and fire protection.	CAO	Director of Finance and Director of Infrastructure & Emergency Services
Communicate with staff	CAO	Communications Specialist
Communications to Residents	All Staff	Use of designated staff.

**Finance**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Model of Service Delivery</b>	<b>Continuity Strategies</b>
Payroll	Process employee payroll and issue payments. Ensure employee group Plan coverage is maintained and employees are receiving benefits due.	In consultation ABM and IT Services, set up remote payroll and payable computer site to process pay and payables.
Issue financial documentation	Documents prepared by Department of Finance personnel.	Defer non-urgent items; use remote work sites when appropriate
Maintain purchasing process, accounts receivable, accounts payable	Completed by Department of Finance personnel	Train additional staff to maintain purchasing process and overall financial transactions. Establish separate G/L account to track costs.
Processing of Workers' Compensation Board claims	Completed by Operations Manager.	Establish remote work sites and train additional staff in claims processing
Ensure sufficient funds are available to meet the Municipality's obligations	Director of Finance	Review budget and bank statements. Establish separate G/L account to track costs.
Management of the Finance Department	Director of Finance	Assigned Alternate
Communicate with staff	Director of Finance	Assigned Alternate

**Human Resources**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Model of Service Delivery</b>	<b>Continuity Strategies</b>
Coordinate human resources services at the Municipality	Human Resources Specialist	Ensure, with assistance from Director of Infrastructure & Emergency Services adequate staffing at all required sites
Maintain dialogue with employee groups	Human Resources Specialist	Department staff will maintain ongoing dialogue with the Municipal employee groups.
Communicate with staff	Human Resources Specialist	Senior Staff

**Infrastructure & Emergency Services**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Model of Service Delivery</b>	<b>Continuity Strategies</b>
Train staff in sanitation and hygiene procedures	Facilities Maintenance to train staff in cleaning procedures	All staff as required
Maintain essential cleanliness in the Municipality's facilities	Facilities Maintenance shall establish and ensure standards are met and set staffing requirements	Additional hours being allocated to increase sanitation levels of door handles, washrooms and counters
Identify and initiate the purchase of the required cleaning, sanitation and PPE supplies for municipal sites	Required materials are identified by Facilities and OHS for purchase by the Director of Infrastructure and Emergency Services	Suppliers have been identified for future additional requirements should the need dictate.
Solid Waste Collection from Residents	Director of Infrastructure & Emergency Services to use existing staff for this service	Employment of outside Contractors if feasible.
Building maintenance (snow removal, grass mowing, grounds maintenance)	Provision of maintenance services is conducted by the Municipality staff under the direction of Infrastructure & Emergency Services.	Non-essential maintenance work may be deferred should staff shortages dictate. Contractors may be employed to carry out work should the situation dictate. The Director of Infrastructure & Emergency Services shall initiate the use of various trades' contractors as required
Physical Plant functions (heating, ventilation, power, water, wastewater, fire safety equipment)	Adequate Plant services must be provided to the Municipality's building for safe operations.	Every effort will be made to keep the Municipality open and in safe condition. Office cancellations due to problems with the operation of physical Plants shall be carried out in accordance with Policy
Ensure adequate staff replacement for Transfer Station Operations	The Operations Manager shall ensure adequate shift schedules to maintain service.	The Operations Manager can provide outside contractor when necessary.

<p>Management of Occupational Health and Safety Programs</p>	<p>Occupational Health and Safety Committee Chairs</p>	<p>In the absence of the Chair, the Infrastructure &amp; Emergency Services or designate will assume the OHS management role.</p>
<p>Communication with staff</p>	<p>Required communication on issues shall flow through the Department Head to staff</p>	<p>Initial presentation to staff on the Plan and the required procedures will be communicated to and through Directors. Ongoing updates will be issued through managers and administration.</p>

## APPENDIX 1: PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

### Minimizing Illness Among Staff and Residents

Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms. You may not know you have symptoms of COVID-19 because they are similar to a cold or flu.

### Symptoms and Precautions

Symptoms of novel coronavirus include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia like symptoms.

The severity can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, infection can lead to death. Current information suggests most people don't experience severe illness or need to be hospitalized.

What to do if you think you might have come in contact with COVID-19?

The Province of Nova Scotia, under the authority of the Health Protection Act, is requiring anyone who has travelled outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days upon return – this means staying home, away from the public, even if you are symptom-free.

If you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?

If you develop a fever, with a temperature 38°C or higher, or a cough, you should call 811 for assessment.

Nova Scotia Health Authority has established COVID-19 Assessment Centre's. If you need in-person assessment, 811 will refer you to a Centre. Don't go to a COVID-19 Assessment Centre unless 811 referred you.

If you've been directed to self-isolate, you can get information from Nova Scotia Health Authority Public Health by contacting the nearest office.

### If you self-isolate or feel unwell

Avoid close, less than three feet, contact with people with chronic conditions, compromised immune systems and older adults.

Don't have visitors into your home.

Avoid situations like social gatherings, work, school, daycare, or visiting other people who are in a health care facility or long-term care residence.

Limit taking public transit, taxis and ride sharing.

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Cover your mouth and nose with your arm when coughing or sneezing.

The Government of Canada has additional resources about how to self-isolate and how to care for someone with COVID-19.

### **Prevention Strategies**

**The best way to avoid illness is through prevention.** Health recommendations to stay well include:

- Wash hands thoroughly and often in warm, soapy water – for at least 20 seconds -or use hand sanitizer as a backup;
- Cough and sneeze into arms and sleeves, not your hand; if using tissues, dispose of them into appropriate receptacle and wash hands;
- Stay home (school, work, public places) when displaying flu-like symptoms;
- Disinfect doorknobs, counters, telephones, computer keyboards and other hard surfaces; and
- Bring hand sanitizer when attending festivals, concerts or other events.
- Do not share drinking glasses or eating utensils.

**Most importantly, anyone – staff, residents, visitors – exhibiting symptoms should stay home. You are asked not to come to the Municipal Offices, Transfer Station, Small Options/Senior’s Homes or work if you have flu-like symptoms.** If you have a flu-like illness, Health Canada recommends that you stay home until you are:

- Symptom free;
- Feeling well; and
- Able to fully participate in all normal day-to-day Municipal activities.

The Municipality will ensure that sufficient supplies of hand cleansers and single use tissues are available in the work place and that receptacles are available for tissue disposal. The Municipality will also strive to provide a “clean” environment, however it is recognized that a clean environment is not necessarily a “sterilized” environment. Disinfectants will be provided in Municipal Properties for use by staff and residents. These will include waterless hand

cleanser and spray bottles and wipes which contain disinfectant.

Primary strategies which will be used in order to minimize illness include:

- Restrict workplace entry of people with symptoms;
- Promote good personal hygiene practices and workplace cleaning practices;
- Minimize, where possible, situations where close contact is necessary (2 metre workspace rule, no shaking hands, limit number of meetings);

### **Intervention Strategies**

Employees demonstrating flu-like symptoms at work are instructed to notify their supervisor and to leave work immediately and to contact a 811for advice and direction.

## APPENDIX 2: EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

To assist with the maintenance of healthy staff members and to ensure that ill employees do not return to work prematurely and place others at risk, Human Resources shall institute modified employee benefit provisions during the pandemic as follows:

**These are general guidelines and individual situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis through the employee's supervisor.**

### **Sick Leave Accommodations**

All Staff will be entitled to their accumulated amount of sick days;

Employees covered under the long-term disability (LTD) Plan will exhaust all sick benefits before being able to access LTD benefits – it is recommended that application to the Plan be made at least 60 days prior to sick benefits coming to an end.

### **Compassionate/Bereavement Leave**

- As per the Personnel Policy.

### **Fitness for Duty Guidelines**

Fitness for Duty Guidelines provide direction for the length of time an employee should remain away from the workplace after contracting the coronavirus. This period of time will be 14 days unless otherwise stated. The guidelines also facilitate an employee's return to work once they are well.

The Municipality is committed to providing a safe work environment in the event of a pandemic, and to protect the health and safety of residents and staff.

**These Fit for Duty Guidelines apply specifically to a pandemic event.**

### **Purpose:**

To provide procedures for identification and intervention when staff members may pose a health threat to the community because they have contracted the coronavirus related to the pandemic.

### **Definitions:**

"Fit for Duty": means able to perform the duties of the job, without creating a risk for other



staff of contracting the coronavirus.

"Health Service Provider" is a doctor of medicine, nurse practitioner or other health care practitioner who is qualified to provide a medical opinion on the state of health of a staff member as it relates to the coronavirus as expected in a pandemic event.

"Supervisor" is the person to whom a staff member reports to.

**Employee Responsibilities:**

1. Reporting to work when fit for duty
2. Notifying the supervisor when not fit for duty
3. Notifying the supervisor when observing a co-worker who may not be fit for duty (in cases where the possibly affected individual is the employee's supervisor, the employee should make the notification to the next higher-level manager or Human Resources).
4. Cooperating with a supervisor's directive and/or referral for a medical evaluation

**Supervisor Responsibilities:**

1. Observing the attendance, performance and behavior of staff they supervise.
2. Interviewing an employee who appears to the supervisor unfit for duty and referring an employee for a medical evaluation when appropriate.
3. Recording the reasons/observations that triggered a fitness for duty medical evaluation referral.
4. Utilizing this policy in a fair and consistent manner, respecting the employee's privacy and the confidentiality of medical information.

**Procedures:**

1. The supervisor who receives reliable information that an employee may be unfit for duty, or through personal observation believes an employee to be unfit for duty, will validate and document the information or observations as soon as is practical. Actions that may trigger the need to evaluate an employee's fitness for duty with respect to this policy are limited to observation of conditions consistent with a pandemic event.
2. The supervisor will present the information or observations to the employee at the earliest possible time in order to validate them, and will allow the employee to respond to the concern. The supervisor will then determine whether the employee should leave the workplace immediately for safety reasons.
3. The supervisor may direct the employee to a health service provider to assess the condition of the employee. An employee may not be allowed to return to work until such an assessment has been provided or until the supervisor has been satisfied that

the employee is fit to return to work.

4. The employer shall be responsible for the additional cost associated with any medical evaluations completed by a health service provider, if required by the employer.
5. Prior to returning to work after recovery from a virus consistent with a pandemic event, the supervisor shall consider advice received from the local health authorities on the length of time considered appropriate to recover from the virus, and the length of time the virus remains infectious.
6. A doctor's note may be required before return to work.