

## Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Board of Directors  
Meeting #5/20, Friday, June 26, 2020

**FROM:** Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

**RE:** **COVID-19 UPDATE**

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### KEY ISSUE

To provide an update to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Board of Directors regarding the ongoing strategic and tactical response to COVID-19 and the mitigation of risks to employees and members of the public.

### RECOMMENDATION

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT this COVID-19 Update report be received.**

### BACKGROUND

Since the commencement of COVID-19's impact on TRCA operations in March 2020, staff have provided updates to the Board of Directors regarding the ongoing response to the pandemic in the form of reports, memos, and presentations. These updates provide an overview of the changing circumstances around the work environment, financial implications, and operational restrictions that TRCA continues to face. These updates outlined TRCA's response through prevention, control, and recovery to manage the uncertain and constantly changing circumstances as part of the pandemic response. Below is a list of previous reports that have contained information regarding COVID-19 impacts and response:

- April 24, 2020 Presentation: *Board of Directors COVID-19 Briefing* – N. Blake
- April 24, 2020 Board Report: *2020 Budget* – M. Tolensky
- April 24, 2020 Board Report: *2020 Budgetary Update COVID19 Impact* – M. Tolensky
- April 24, 2020 Board Report: *TRCA Administrative Office Building Project* – M. Tolensky
- May 1, 2020 Executive Report: *2020 Three Month Financial Report* – M. Tolensky
- May 22, 2020 Board Report: *TRCA Administrative Office Building Project* - M. Tolensky
- May 22, 2020 Board Report: *TRCA Enforcement and Compliance During COVID-19* - S. Dhalla

The Province of Ontario announced on June 2, 2020 that they were extending Emergency Orders to June 30, 2020 under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. This extension has been made to continue to protect the health and safety of the public during the COVID-19 outbreak. The health and safety of employees and the public continue to be TRCA's top priority. The Senior Leadership Team established TRCA's COVID-19 Recovery Playbook which lays the foundation for TRCA's staged approach to reopening, which directly aligns with the Provincial direction and their *Framework for Reopening our Province*. The Senior Leadership Team will continue to review Provincial directions to determine the course of action on how to safely reopen elements of operations and move through our Recovery Playbook.

### RATIONALE

The COVID-19 pandemic and Provincially declared emergency has resulted in closures of TRCA facilities as well as the cancellation of TRCA events and regularly scheduled programming. Continued restrictions have dramatically impacted TRCA's business models and

## Item 8.1

associated revenues, primarily in the Education and Training and Parks and Culture Divisions. With the safety and wellbeing of employees and members of the public being the top priority for TRCA, procedures to mitigate risks for all staff. This includes alternative working arrangements for all staff with the ability to perform their duties from home. At this time, minimal impacts to business continuity related to working from home are anticipated.

TRCA will continue to follow provincial and municipal guidelines for public health and safe re-opening procedures. Across TRCA's vast service offerings, adjustments have been made to conventional operations – everything from sanitary protocols, health and safety protocols, social distancing protocols and fee adjustments – to allow for the gradual re-opening in accordance with the recovery playbook and government direction. The following addresses the major COVID-19 impacts on select TRCA service areas and employees:

### **Employee Redeployment**

To mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on displaced employees, the Senior Leadership Team with Human Resources rolled out a robust Redeployment Program on April 8, 2020 to lessen the financial impact on employees resulting from COVID-19. All displaced employees were offered an opportunity to participate in TRCA's Redeployment Program. Human Resources received approximately 14% uptake in participating in the program with twelve displaced employees successfully being temporarily redeployed to other TRCA positions. A second call out to displaced employees for redeployment opportunities was issued May 26, 2020 which resulted in a much smaller interest rate of approximately 2%. Human Resources is currently reviewing redeployment displacement opportunities for these individuals.

### **Employee Reskilling**

Employees have been organically participating in reskilling through the support of their supervisors to address skills gaps and meet ongoing operational needs. This exercise has increased the transferrable skills of our workforce, while mitigating impacts resulting from COVID-19. Organic reskilling has enabled the Senior Leadership Team to keep displacement at a level having the least impact on staff and operations, while remaining fiscally prudent in workforce budgeting.

### **Water Risk Management and Regional Biodiversity**

For those staff performing field work, additional protocols have been put in place including additional required communication, awareness and required training; personal hygiene and illness monitoring; general safety procedures, vehicle usage and fueling protocols; safety standards for working around the general public and all contractors and deliveries; as well as additional safety meetings and document Management.

### **Greenspace Securement and Management**

As of March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, TRCA closed all parking lots at trail head locations to minimize the opportunity for social gatherings and transmission of the virus. All green spaces in parks, trails, ravines, and conservation areas remained open for walkthrough access only with instructions to users to maintain the safe physical distance of at least two meters from others as per the Provincial directives. Additional signage was installed at all parking lot entrances, and trail access points which included standard information regarding ways to reduce exposure and transmission of the virus. As of May 22, 2020, TRCA has been moving forward with the re-opening of parking lots and access points in consultation with partner municipalities. Protocols will continue to be updated in alignment with Provincial directives and partner municipality guidelines.

## Item 8.1

### **Tourism and Recreation**

Effective Saturday, May 30, 2020 TRCA opened Conservation Areas and parking lots for passive use, walking, and hiking without access to any additional facilities. Glen Haffy, Albion Hills, Heart Lake, Boyd, Bruce's Mill and Petticoat Creek Conservation Areas are open to members of the public, for paid access. Senior Leadership Team made the decision to open these facilities without full media recognition to limit the number of visitors to these facilities. Health and safety protocols and procedures have been established for staff working in the conservation areas including personal hygiene and illness monitoring; general safety procedures and require personal protective equipment, vehicle usage and fueling protocols; safety standards for working around the general public; as well as additional safety meetings and document Management. Protocols have also been established around the management and cleanliness of washroom facilities within Conservation Parks. These protocols are aligned to partner municipality guidelines. As announced on June 8, 2020 water recreational facilities such as outdoor splash pads and wading pools, and all swimming pools may be part of future Stage 2 openings. TRCA will continue to work with partner municipalities to develop potential protocols that will be required to ensure the safety of staff and public.

All third-party agreements, partnerships, and events including filming contracts and Tree Top Trekking, have been on hold with operations being limited due to the Provincial directives. This has had a significant impact on revenues which is forecasted to continue throughout the remainder of 2020 while restrictions are still in place. As of June 8, 2020, the Province announced film and television production activities, with limits to enable physical distancing once Phase 2 begins. Partners such as Tree Top Trekking are now beginning to open in Niagara and Hamilton and are thinking about steps to open in Heart Lake and Bruce's Mill within Provincial limitations.

#### *Camping*

Initiated in early May, in accordance with Provincial criteria being met, seasonal camping was opened for those users that do not have alternative residence in Canada and could provide their own access to utilities. As of early June, all campers with access to self-sustaining utilities are now able to access the campgrounds. The full reopening of all facilities is expected in June when the protocols around the management and cleanliness of facilities can be established.

#### *Golf Course*

On May 23, 2020 following a Provincial announcement regarding the opening of golf courses, Bathurst Glen Golf Course and Driving Range, along with Bruce's Mill Driving Range were opened in a phased manner with reduced hours and staffing. Following this successful reopening and utilizing the additional training and health and safety protocols that were put in place, both facilities have now opened with full seasonal hours.

#### *Black Creek Pioneer Village (BCPV) - Public Use*

Although BCPV is not currently open to the public, staff are examining the current operations and new protocols to prepare for a phased opening plan with options synchronized with those outlined in the Education and Outreach section of this report pending the financial viability of implementing Provincial direction for the safe and responsible reopening of public museum facilities. Regular inspections and maintenance of the grounds, infrastructure, and artifacts have continued to ensure that the level of care standards are being met.

### **Planning and Development Review**

Based on current workload, revenue targets for Planning and Development are anticipated to meet 2020 targets.

## Item 8.1

### Education and Outreach

TRCA's education centers, and associated programming including the Kortright Centre for Conservation and BCPV, remain closed to the public with a reopening date currently unknown. To adapt to this uncertainty, over the past 2 months, TRCA has initiated alternative programming and delivery methods as a means of adapting business operations to the changing circumstances while continuing to stay relevant. This includes inviting participants to take part in TRCA's *#AtHomeWithNature* and *#VillageAtHome* series on Facebook, along with several other home-based family activities, live interactive workshops, learning modules for students, and online exhibits.

While the timeline for reopening of regularly scheduled programming is not known at this time, staff are exploring opportunities to leverage the education facilities that will engage residents in natural and cultural heritage learning activities that will continue to ensure visitor safety. Some of the new offerings currently under review are:

#### *Virtual Aquatic Plants Program*

The Aquatic Plants Program (APP) will be a curriculum-linked, hands-on educational experience offered at no charge to teachers and students. Participating teachers will receive e-learning resources to share with their students through online classroom platforms like Google Classroom. Teachers will also have opportunity to receive native plant seeds for them to grow or share with their students. Once mature, participants are invited to transplant their plants into their backyard, balcony, or windowsill.

#### *Neighborhood Nature Camps (We Come To You)*

TRCA is currently exploring a new delivery model where interested participants pre-book a nature camp experience. TRCA will deliver the programming onsite at your location. This half day experience offers the opportunity for TRCA educators and teaching professionals to teach participants about local nature in the comfort and safety of their yard. TRCA will bring activities to help explore micro-ecosystems and other similar program offerings.

#### *Pre-Booked Public Programs (You Come To Us)*

TRCA will offer guided, pre-booked nature and cultural heritage experiences for family groups of up to four people of the same household. Highlighting the unique ecological and heritage assets of TRCA, these programs will be delivered at TRCA sites in compliance with provincial health directives. Opportunities (examples) include:

- Guided nature hike of the Kortright Centre
- Guided tour of Black Creek Pioneer Village
- Personalized canoe tour of Lake St. George
- Mountain bike excursion at Albion Hills CA
- Campfire at Claremont Field Centre

#### *Virtual At Home Camps*

TRCA will offer daily pre-booked virtual camp experiences covering a range of topics. Camp sessions will provide programming from unique natural and cultural heritage learning centres (Kortright, Black Creek, Tommy Thompson Park, Field Centres) that engages children and families in interactive activities. Participating families will receive tailored resources for home activities.

## Item 8.1

BCPV has also undertaken a process to adapt their education programming through the creation of several home-based alternative activities and offerings including:

- Virtual camps and activities created in partnership with environmental educators at Toronto and Region Conservation Authority creating a unique way to explore the cultural and natural heritage of the region;
- Workshops and activities for participants to complete at home, including 19th century recipes;
- Online exhibits featuring rarely seen items from the collection of artifacts showcasing the history of the Toronto region; and
- Virtual “field trips” for classes with grade-specific educational activities launching in fall 2020.

### **Sustainable Communities**

With physical distancing requirements in place, all regularly scheduled events and in-person meetings have either been cancelled or adapted for a virtual audience. This includes Partner in Project Green, SNAP, and the TRIECA conference (March) which is being adapted to online events (31 in total) that feature webinars and online resources rather than an in-person conference. Many of the community and industry focused programs have adapted to allow for an online presence and learning opportunities, minimizing the impacts to business continuity.

### **Corporate Services**

TRCA’s Health and Safety Specialist is facilitating the bulk purchasing of COVID-19 related personal protective equipment (PPE) on behalf of the organization. Health and Safety is continuing to work in partnership with Procurement Services and key representatives from each division to identify needs and distribute supplies appropriately to ensure that all safety protocols can be followed using the required resources.

### **Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan**

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

**Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value**

**Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models**

**Strategy 10 – Accelerate innovation**

### **FINANCIAL DETAILS**

Since March 2020, staff have continued to track the year to date impacts of the COVID-19 restrictions on TRCA’s revenues to adjust and appropriately scale ongoing operations. This is inclusive of generating and revising the financial forecasts for the remainder of 2020 to facilitate related operational decisions. As previously reported 169 staff were placed on emergency leave in April with 12 staff being redeployed and nine (9) returning to their base position to date.

Moving forward, staff will continue to prepare these reports and forecasts as the restrictions are adjusted and operations begin to reopen. TRCA will also maintain ongoing communications with partner municipalities to ensure that the impacts continue to be reported accordingly.

### **ONGOING WORK**

The Human Resources team established TRCA’s COVID-19 Recovery Playbook that the Senior Leadership Team has developed and is in the process of implementing. The Playbook lays the foundation for TRCA’s staged approach to reopening its offices and facilities, which directly aligns with the Provincial direction and their Framework for Reopening the Province. The Playbook details the criteria that TRCA will utilize on this staged recovery approach and

## Item 8.1

highlights the agility of the Recovery Playbook to be able to adopt adjusting legislative and public health recommendations and requirements during this period of transition. The Playbook also provides flexibility to address any future COVID-19 outbreaks which may necessitate TRCA reverting to previous stages to manage.

As outlined in the COVID-19 Recovery Playbook, each corporate division is required to implement a staggered return plan, aligned to each of the facilities plan to ensure employees are adhering to physical distancing requirements. This plan is required to ensure adherence to recommendations, requirements and as a means of risk reduction. The divisional plans will need to determine which employees are required to return to work immediately and those who may gradually be brought back. Consideration around the reopening of schools, daycare centers and other priority services will influence the timelines around reopening and the return of staff to the office.

TRCA's Human Resources team will continue to lead the monitoring of public health, legislative changes, and partner municipality practices to ensure TRCA is legislatively compliant and has adopted the most current public health requirements and recommendations and is aligned to our partners. Environmental scanning and best practice reviews will continue with our peer conservation authorities, municipalities, not-for-profits, and related associations. This will ensure the sharing of information and alignment of practices with peers and partners. Additionally, TRCA will continue to review and update TRCA's Pandemic Flu and Infectious Illness Policy as required.

Additionally, a report on the financial implications of COVID-19 on the organization will be included in the Six-Month Financial Report, to be provided to the Board in September 2020.

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