



Message from Town Council

Town of Peace River

March 20, 2020

This past week has seen an unprecedented disruption in our lives and our community. Closures, cancellations and a growing sense of fear, not just in Peace River but across the country have left many concerned for their present and future. While it would be irresponsible to downplay the reality of this pandemic, it would also be irresponsible to shed our hope.

Hope has driven the development of this community from the beginning. Hope for peace led to the naming of the river, hope for a better life led to the settlement of our town, and hope for a better future has led our development over the last century. Through the darkest times, hope has kept us going and it will see us through this.

Our entire Town Council wants to let you know that we are working as hard as possible to ensure community safety and stability. A team of dedicated municipal staff has been working behind the scenes to reduce the impact and keep the community moving. We are focusing first on ensuring critical services like the provision of clean water and the treatment of wastewater continues, as well as fire department readiness. Our second priority is the provision of as many of our regular services as possible while ensuring the health and safety of our staff and our community members. We are supporting a global effort to combat this pandemic and though we may be socially distancing it is powerful to know we will never be alone in this fight.

We are in contact with the Province and its health authorities, each of us has our own responsibilities in a crisis and our own jurisdictions, however, we are working together and supporting each other in our roles.

During the coming weeks and months, we will be tested, as individuals and as a community. It will be up to us to choose how to respond to this. Fear and anger spread faster than any virus and we must keep that in check. Please do not share rumours, please check information sources before sharing them. Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services both have lots of information and resources available on their websites. Practice good social distancing, practice good hygiene and check in on your family, and your neighbours. Call them, text them, email, or chat. One day we will be past this and we will be stronger for that.

As the situation continues to evolve daily, so must our response. As a result, beginning on Monday, March 23 the Town of Peace River's main office building, including Community Services, will be closed to the public. This decision is not one that has been made lightly but we are concerned with the need to protect not only members of the public but also our front-line staff.

While residents will not be able to access services in person at Town Hall, we have been busy working to provide alternate arrangements so residents can access services via the phone or through email.

Town Administration Office

P.O. Box 6600, 9911-100 Street Peace River, AB T8S 1S4

Phone: (780) 624-2574 Fax: (780) 624-4664

Website: www.peaceriver.ca

General Email: info@peaceriver.ca

To be clear, although we are closing the office to the public, work is continuing, services will still be provided. We ask that if you have questions to please call Town Hall at (780) 624-2574, 9 am to 12 pm or 1 pm to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. During this time our phone lines may be busier than normal if you get through to a voicemail please leave a message with your name and phone number and staff will follow up with a phone call. Council will regularly review the need to keep Town Hall closed to public access and will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.

We understand that residents may have questions about how some services will be provided, we have done our best to address some of those concerns below. As our response unfolds more information will be shared.

Utility Bills

Payments can be made via online or telephone banking, by monthly Pre-Authorized Payment (or automatic withdrawal), by cheque in the mail, or the payment slot left at the Town Hall (up the wheelchair ramp on the south side of the building). For those who have not signed up for the Pre-Authorized Payment program and wish to do so, please call our office and we can arrange things. We understand that with many businesses slowing down and many people facing uncertain financial situations utility payments may be burdensome.

We are working on a mechanism regarding payment deferrals for utilities and will have more information in the coming days. We want to assure you that water will not be shut off for non-payment at this time.

Taxi Passes

We understand that the taxi pass program is not an optional means of support but a literal lifeline for critical medical services and other things. Our taxi pass program will continue but there will be some changes. Beginning on Monday, March 23 please call (780) 624-1000 between 9 am to 12 pm and 1 pm to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday to arrange taxi pass pickup. If you are a new client please call that number as well to apply for the program.

Council meetings

Through this time Town Council will continue to meet to direct the business of the Town. Meeting audio will be posted immediately following the Council meeting and will be accessible on Town Council's webpage (peaceriver.ca/council). We are looking for methods to allow remote public participation, even though due to existing technology it may be somewhat limited.

During our meeting on Monday, March 23 Council will be discussing our COVID-19 response and ways to support residents both physically and financially. This will include reviewing measures related to utility payment deferrals, property tax deferrals, and whether a state of local emergency declaration would be warranted.

Other services

Town Hall provides many other services, which will need to be accessed by phone or electronic means. Below is a list of the services that will continue to be accessible via our main office phone line (780) 624-2574.

- Development and building permits,
- Taxi driver permits,
- Business licences,
- Cemetery services,
- Opening & closing utility accounts,
- Recycling and solid waste collection, and
- Family and Community Support Services (FCSS).

Details and changes will continue to be added to our website, peaceriver.ca/covid19. Please share this link with people you know. That page is being updated frequently and will be our main source of information sharing through this period. Copies of this statement will be mailed out to residents, advertised in local papers, and available to print from our website.

The province of Alberta is keeping Albertans informed via their website alberta.ca/covid19.

Thank you to the people of Peace River for your patience so far, this has been a trying week for all of us. Calm minds and hearts full of love will see us through this if we help each other and work together.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Tarpey
Deputy Mayor Elaine Manzer
Councillor Colin Needham
Councillor Byron Schamehorn
Councillor Orren Ford
Councillor Don Good
Councillor Johanna Downing