



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

TOWN OF PEACE RIVER

March 25, 2020

During Town Council's meeting on March 23, the Declaration of a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) was discussed as an option. At this time Council has decided not to proceed with issuing a SOLE. This decision does not prevent Town Council from declaring a SOLE at any point in the future if the situation dictates. Based on the Town of Peace River's emergency management bylaw two councillors can make the decision to issue a SOLE.

Background: What is a State of Local Emergency and what does it do?

A SOLE is a very powerful legislative tool that municipalities can use when an emergency is happening that requires extraordinary measures to be taken. This is done through legislation by providing additional emergency powers to local officials for the purpose of responding to an emergency. A SOLE can be active for up to seven days then needs to be renewed or it lapses.

These are not measures to be taken lightly, under a State of Local Emergency a local government can:

- Restrict travel,
- Distribute essential supplies,
- Evacuate people and animals,
- Enter properties and buildings without a warrant,
- Procure fixed pricing on essential products,
- Conscript individuals, and equipment for use in responding to the emergency.

The decision to not issue a SOLE at this time comes after discussions with the Province of Alberta including members of Municipal Affairs and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. The decision is in line with the recommendations we have received. Again, if the situation changes and we need the powers granted under a SOLE, we will declare one.

With regards to the Province's declaration of a Public Health Emergency, the Town is able to assist and is assisting local health authorities through that. A State of Local Emergency is not required for us to support Alberta Health in their vital work in containing this pandemic.

We encourage all Town residents to heed the advice of Alberta Health, limit your trips to only essential things and practice physical distancing, keeping 6ft or 2m of space between yourself and others, wash your hands and if you have symptoms phone Healthlink at 811

Measures we have taken

Although Town Council has not issued a SOLE at this time, we have taken action to respond to this crisis.

Actions taken to date include:

- Our Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) has been activated. This group of employees is in regular contact with Alberta Health and the Provincial Operations Centre, which coordinates the Province's emergency response. They are actively monitoring the situation working with the Province and other authorities to ensure Peace River is as safe as possible.
- We updated our Pandemic Business Continuity Plan, which is essential to make sure the Town has a plan in place to maintain critical services such as water and wastewater treatment and fire protection. This includes identifying staff who can provide backup in critical positions.
- We proactively closed recreation facilities and public buildings. In fact, a day before the Province mandated the closure of recreation facilities the Town of Peace River had already closed ours, in addition, we have also closed Town Hall to public access.
- We are working with AHS to provide support locally as they ramp up their operations in response to the pandemic.
- We directed staff not to cut off water for non-payment at this time and instituted a 30-day waiver on penalties for late or non-payment.
- We also directed staff to bring forward options to a future council meeting as to how best we can bring in relief regarding utility and property taxes to help residents manage the financial aspects of the COVID pandemic.

This is a trying time for our community, for the province, country and the world. We are taking our cues from Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, who are in turn working with the other provinces and the Federal Government. The situation is evolving, rapidly, and our response will as well. We encourage Peace Riverites who are curious about the Municipal response to check our website: peaceriver.ca/covid19 which we are regularly updating. For health-related inquiries please visit Alberta Health's COVID-19 webpage alberta.ca/covid19.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Tarpey