

## Update on Wahta Response to Covid-19

Friday, March 20, 2020

As numbers of reported cases of confirmed Covid-19 virus continues to grow we are continuing our efforts here at Wahta to help meet the immediate needs of community members, in the most vulnerable population including seniors, and people in isolation.

Beginning Tuesday, the Emergency Control Group (ECG) began meeting to guide the coordination of services and to plan for future developments with the resources we have at our disposal. Our offices were closed to help curb the spread of the virus, however the ECG determined what services were to be kept as essential.

There have been three meetings of the control group this week. This group looks at general updates regarding our response and the pandemic. Reports from members cover the areas of Administration, Finance, Health and Social Services, Infrastructure, Maintenance, Communications, and Programs. Included members are the Community Health Nurse, and the Environmental Health Officer.

To date the Meals on Wheels program has continued, the food box program is now back in service, as well as arrangements have been set up for anyone who is homebound to have the Foodland store at nearby MacTier deliver to homes (delivery charge would apply). As I have reported previously the regular wellness checks continue, and there has some increased demand in services being requested due to the situation. It is hoped that these programs can help in minimizing the need for people to go out.

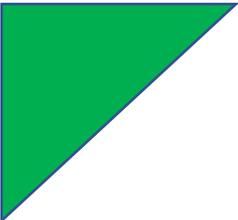
Wahta staff have been sourcing out and ordering some more personal protection supplies such as hand sanitizer, masks, and locating more bathroom tissue since the general population seems to be buying it all up. There should be no problem with food supplies in stores in a short while as the buying frenzy starts to die down. Water should not be a problem, however those who are doing their part to stay closer to home may need assistance in receiving the water they normally buy. If you have been using your well water prior to this outbreak the water is still good. Wahta staff can come do a bacteria test on your well as always. That being said, the administration has ordered in extra water.

The Emergency Control Group is taking all events and issues into consideration. Discussions are now turning to some of the effects of social distancing and staying home. Such changes like no school for the next while, no day care programs, no recreational activities, and seniors staying home, tend to weigh heavy on all our minds. It can be very stressful in these times. There is no easy answer but staff are looking at ways to provide resources you can use in your homes.

Each morning the managers of the Wahta administration meet by phone to ensure staff are meeting the needs of the community with whatever we can provide. Directions are then assigned to non-essential staff working from home or to those essential staff still providing direct service.

I am sending updates to Wahta Council members that are not on the emergency control group. They are following and offering advice. There is a lot of activity between local, provincial, and federal governments dealing with the response and the Indigenous population. This information I am passing on also so that we as a whole have a better picture of the situation and how to deal with it. The control group communications are being made more effectively and will be providing more particular details about services and education on this effort to curb the virus, more than I give here.

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**Update from the Chief**

You can be assured that while staff are limited by not being in the office, they are fully engaged in doing what they can to provide some normality to services Wahta does provide. Their dedication to the community is showing through and I hope we can all appreciate the work they are doing under the circumstances.

The barrage of news reports we see all day add to our stress but it is important to listen to the key messages that are being sent on basic ways to prevent the spread of the virus. There are many things people share on social media that may not be accurate and not based on fact. Whether it is about food shortages, home remedies, or how services are delivered, we all need to come together during this time and hear the factual messages. We should take time and be supportive of others efforts, and if you can, step up and offer to others who might need it. Offering to help others is the most positive way we can overcome the discomforts during this time of inconvenience and change from what we are used to.

The next meeting on services will take place Monday afternoon. Watch for information on the website before and after that time.

Niawen for your attention.

Chief Philip Franks