



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Recreation and Courthouse Services

Date: April 14, 2020

## VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

## **Background:**

With the onset of COVID-19, our departments are challenged to reconsider traditional services delivered to their residents. Traditional gatherings and services are no longer the norm in this environment.

While we are absolutely committed to hiring students, we are also faced with financial issues, along with uncertainty surrounding how long this self-isolation is going to occur. It should be noted that the Federal Government has already anticipated that organizations may not apply for student funding, as they cannot assure the position will be available.

We have been in conversation at the staff level and have come to certain conclusions about levels of service that cannot be accomplished in this current summer.

Specifically, we are referring to Courthouse tour guides and Day Camp staff. The following is a brief on each department's action plan, thus far, for the summer services.

## **Recreation and Active Living**

The department has concluded absolutely that a Day Camp or a Teen Day Camp cannot occur this summer. We cannot be assured access to the schools in this environment, and we have too much uncertainty on the status of social distancing in the summer months. I would support their conclusion that these camps cannot be put on. It is a tremendous service provided to our youth and the parents in the summer months, so it is a considerable loss. The net cost savings for such an action is about \$70,000.

The Recreation Department is committed to hiring students, nonetheless. They are planning on providing online related activities, potentially aligning local restaurateurs and tourism operators for an online experience. This service could be provided from the students home in case of ongoing social distancing. Furthermore, they are increasing their applications to federal and provincial government to support students for maintenance related activities. We have an opportunity to use Federal/Provincial moneys to engage our youth to do community clean up and beautification, all of which would be done using our well established safety precautions.

I am in full support of these initiatives and have instructed Recreation to obtain as many Federal funding positions as practical, as the funds are federal, and the benefit is local.

The budget contemplates a bit of normalcy in the fall and winter months, with programming continuing somewhat traditionally. The Recreation staff is still seeking active living funding support, and has capital projects associated with active transportation – signage etc..

### **Courthouse and Archives.**

The Courthouse and Archives work closely with our local Historical Society in Tusket. Together, they co-apply and co-support positions for both archival and tour purposes. The Tour operators cannot accomplish this task in this environment. The good news is that we can continue to support an Archival function safely. We are also able to continue working behind the scenes to prepare for our museum evaluation, which will be conducted by Association of Nova Scotia Museums, on behalf of Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage Department, which has been postponed to 2021, in light of Covid-19. This would include renewing/updating some Court House interpretive panels, possibly conducting initial research/work on a new temporary exhibit in preparation for 2021 tourist season, and working on programming that could be offered online, including creating content to be shared on our Social Media channels throughout the year. The success of these positions would require the flexibility of having summer staff work mostly from home and at the museum, with limited access to the Archives. Our staff is seeking funding for that purpose, again, with the concept that hiring local students to work safely continues to be a priority for the Municipality. As the cost is shared between two units, the cost savings is expected to be \$5,000 to \$7,000.

### **CAO's Recommendation:**

Recommend that Council endorse the changes to services as recommended by staff. While programming is typically managed by administration, the significance to the community and the alternative service provision is something we would ask Council to support. Budget implications are under development and will be provided to Council as soon as they are completed. I have attached an example of COVID related revenue and expense impacts for your consideration. The elimination of Day Camp related revenues and expenditures reduced the COVID impact significantly.

The CAO's approach to municipal services is to preserve existing services where financially possible, and resisting additional staff and programming costs that are not supported by other levels of government funding.

### **Suggested motion:**

That Council approve the cancellation of Day Camps and Courthouse related tours for the 2020 summer season, due to COVID related restrictions.

That Council support staff hires that are supported with Federal and Provincial funding and can execute the work safely respecting COVID restrictions.