



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: COVID-19 uncertainty leads to staffing adjustments by the Town of Amherst

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The extreme uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led the Town of Amherst to adjust its staffing requirements.

“We have been analyzing staffing requirements in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and I have concluded, based on the recommendations of the senior management team, that this staffing adjustment is necessary,” CAO Greg Herrett said on April 9, 2020.

“I regret having to take these actions. However, they are necessary at this time.”

The town has advised CUPE and its impacted local members that, for the foreseeable future, the town will not require its seasonal workforce and therefore will not be recalling them this spring. This impacts six seasonal workers on layoff in the Public Works Department and three seasonal workers in the Recreation Department who would normally work in parks and greenspaces.

In addition, the town has suspended all plans to hire students this summer and will be cancelling all current application processes leading to student employment. It is laying off its four crossing guards as school is suspended until at least May 4, is suspending the engagement of an onsite energy manager and is suspending the current competition for a term active-living co-ordinator position.

Herrett noted that in recent years, the town has hired up to 20 student employees, but with seasonal CUPE members on layoff, hiring students to do work that would also be done by CUPE members would be against the collective agreement.

“Beyond the financial considerations, which range between \$60,000 and \$100,000 per month, we are also concerned about our ability to keep employees appropriately physically distanced in vehicles with a full seasonal workforce in addition to student employees,” Herrett added.



The CAO said all town staff were informed of the decision via email during the afternoon of April 9.

He noted the actions taken involved current part-time and seasonal employees only, however, the town is constantly re-evaluating “our resource requirements and our fiscal capacity with a view to maintaining essential services in light of the pandemic.”

“As our environment changes, these resource requirements may change. We are also monitoring federal and provincial government orders and available assistance programs.”

As the situation changes daily, the town will “continue to re-evaluate the actions necessary to continue to provide essential services in a financially sustainable way,” the CAO added.

Herrett praised the work done by town staff since the pandemic began.

“I want to ... acknowledge the professionalism, dedication and flexibility that every single Town of Amherst employee has displayed over the past four weeks while we have been dealing with COVID-19,” he said. “Whether you are on the front lines as first responder, in Public Works and Recreation maintaining our critical infrastructure or working from home supporting these and other essential services, thank you very much.”

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