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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Memorandum CAO-M03-2020 Pandemic Pay

For Consideration by Council on June 16, 2020

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**To:** Mayor Hewitt and Members of Council  
**From:** Craig Manley, Chief Administrative Officer

On April 25, 2020 the Province of Ontario announced a “temporary pandemic pay” initiative for eligible frontline workers fighting the globally-recognized pandemic corona virus (COVID-19). This is a targeted program designed to support employees who work in congregate care settings or primarily with vulnerable sector populations, where maintaining physical distancing is difficult or impossible. The Provincial government announced the program in recognition of the dedication, long hours and increased risk of working to contain the COVID-19 outbreak that was placed on frontline staff. The pay consists of two components for the period of April 24, 2020 – August 13, 2020 inclusive:

- \$4.00 per hour worked, in addition to regular wages;
- \$250 monthly lump sum, when worked at least 100 hours in a defined 4 week period, equating to a potential maximum of \$1,000 paid for the inclusive period.

Eligible workplaces include health care, long-term care, retirement homes, social services and corrections. As it relates to Haldimand County, this impacts various positions at Grandview Lodge and Paramedics.

Although it was clear that this initiative was to be funded by the Provincial government, initially it was unclear if the administration of one or both components would be carried out by the Province or downloaded to the employer. Subsequent information was released confirming employers as responsible for administering such pay and, on May 29, 2020, Ontario Regulation 241/20 formally set out special rules to allow employers the ability to administer temporary pandemic pay, retroactive to the April 24, 2020 effective date.

The Province has since contacted all eligible employers, service delivery partners or employer associations. The Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) is the association acting on behalf of all municipalities in this initiative. To date, AMO has advocated for clear parameters and consistent expectations across the three ministries and four program areas that apply to municipalities. Despite the updates provided publically by the Province, key information as it relates to eligibility, funding and administration remained unknown until very recently. In absence of a funding agreement from the Province, and on the advice of AMO, the County has withheld implementing this payment until the details were released.

At the time of drafting this memo, those details remain unknown, however, based on the information thus far, the following positions are expected to be confirmed by the Province as eligible for the provincial pandemic pay:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Work Group</b>
Primary Care Paramedic	Emergency Services	SEIU
Registered Nurse	Grandview Lodge	ONA
Cook	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Dietary Aide	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Housekeeping Aide	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Laundry Aide	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Maintenance	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Maple Grove Dietary	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
MDS / RAI Coordinator	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Nursing Quality Assurance	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Personal Support Worker	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Registered Practical Nurse	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Van Attendant/Maintenance	Grandview Lodge	UFCW
Accounts Clerk, Grandview	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Admin Assistant, Grandview	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Admin Assistant/Scheduler	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Administrative Asst., Nursing	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Recreation Programmer, GVL	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Resident Services Clerk	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Summer Maintenance, GVL	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Unit Clerk, Nursing	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Employee Wellness Representative	Administration/ Grandview Lodge	Non Union
<b>Total Estimated Cost for Above Positions</b>	<b>\$350,000 (in hourly wages)</b>	<b>\$150,000 (in lump sum payments)</b>

Based on the approved staffing complement for these positions, the estimated cost of the temporary pandemic pay is approximately \$350,000 in hourly wages plus \$150,000 in lump sum payments for the total 16 week period. This provincial initiative will be fully funded through an amendment to the existing transfer agreements set up with the Province for Emergency Services and Long Term Care revenues, allowing for reimbursement to the County over phases and requiring additional reporting. Although funding is anticipated to cover all expenses associated with this initiative, except the administration costs to process the pandemic pay, as with any funding agreement, there is some risk that reimbursement will be subject to interpretation or changed factors. Actual expenses and revenue related to this program will be reported to Council through regular budget processes.

Staff fully support this Provincial initiative and have implemented processes for administering the approved pay, both retroactively and for the duration of the approved time limit. Eligible employees can anticipate to see the hourly and lump sum pandemic pay earnings as early as the next available pay deposit, being June 25, 2020, with retroactivity to follow.

Notwithstanding support of this initiative, staff are aware that the temporary pandemic pay will cause unintended inequity/perceived hardship on directly related, but non-eligible employees. For example, compression issues currently exist, without the pandemic pay factored in, when comparing the Registered Nurse base wages to the Assistant Director of Nursing (ADON) and Director of Nursing positions at Grandview Lodge, as well as when comparing the Paramedics with Deputy Chief positions. When compared on an annual basis, one position (ADON) actually already earns less than their direct

subordinate position (RN). Staff have flagged the compression issue, outside of the pandemic, for future review and follow up as this issue impacts the ability to retain and attract staff to these positions.

Once the temporary pandemic pay is considered, the existing compression issues are further exacerbated and, in more cases, an employee will earn more than their direct supervisor(s). The Province has expressly excluded 'management' employees from this initiative, however staff believe the frontline non-union supervisors, as well as instrumental, key administrative staff members heavily involved in supporting these essential working groups, should be considered for similar recognition for several reasons:

- The positions meet the provincial description of dedication, working long hours at heightened exposure in a congregate care setting;
- Directly supporting the patients/residents and those essential staff who are at heightened exposure, while also being exposed on a regular basis to the same COVID-19 related risks and requirements for use of PPE;
- Vital to the safe operation of the facility or function and effectively managing staff to ensure compliance with safety standards, protocols and reporting, and thereby reducing the risks of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Meets principle of fairness/reasonableness in terms of equity among staff directly involved in managing an exceptional crisis situation;
- Recognizes the challenges experienced by this group of staff at a reasonable cost per employee and the level of success achieved in avoiding outbreaks in vulnerable populations.

Specifically, staff suggest the following positions (10 individuals) be considered for some level of a fair and reasonable financial recognition considering their exclusion from the provincial pandemic pay program and their involvement in direct support:

Position	Workplace	Work Group
Deputy Chief, Paramedic Services (3)	Emergency Services	Non Union
Assistant Director of Nursing	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Director of Nursing	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Supervisor, Dietary Services (2)	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Supervisor, Facility Operations	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Supervisor, Programs & Support	Grandview Lodge	Non Union
Coordinator, Health and Safety	Administration	Non Union

The following are offered as potential alternatives to consider:

1. **Expand Hourly Pandemic Pay Premium.** Administering a \$4.00/hour worked payment in an identical fashion to those included in the provincial program would promote consistency of program in the identified program area and would address compression issues from the pandemic pay. Given that management was explicitly excluded from the provincial list, this option may serve to undermine the provincial program and/or put pressure on other employers to do the same.
2. **Expand Monthly Lump Sum Payment.** Providing staff with a "lump sum" payment mirroring the Province schedule totalling \$1,000 over 16 weeks again, provides consistency. This could be done as a stand-alone initiative or in addition to pay premium considered in Option 1. If done as a stand-alone option, the financial recognition is much less than what other front line staff will receive based on the overall pandemic pay program and may not meet the principle of fairness or reasonableness.

3. **Alternative Lump Sum Payment.** Providing a one-time “lump sum” payment in recognition of additional efforts, risks and hours is outside of the provincial program but within the spirit of recognition and may go a long way in addressing unintentional inequity. The actual amount or percentage could be set by Council, however as an example, the equivalent of one week’s earnings has been considered for this option. This option provides flexibility to control the costs in a fair and reasonable manner.
4. **Approve “Exceptional Circumstances” Pay.** Rather than providing a set amount lump sum, the current Non-Union policy currently allows for payment, at straight time, for actual hours worked in response to an “exceptional circumstance” or emergency. This means that staff in supervisory positions who would normally not be paid for extra time worked, but rather are able to take time in lieu to a maximum set number of hours, would instead be paid out for the actual hours worked over and above a normal work week. This option assumes that eligible employees have been tracking their time and/or can substantiate claims for payment. It is important to note that under this language, the CAO has authority to designate eligible employees.

The cost to implement any of the above options ranges from \$10,000 - \$18,000 or at upset about 5% of the cost of the extra pandemic pay to all other eligible employees. The purpose of this memo is to seek direction from Council on whether there is support in principle of the recognition to this particular staff group, and direct the CAO or designate to report back to Council with costing details of the recommended option, once total municipal COVID-19 financial impacts are known. While the suggested extra funding would be outside of the 2020 approved budget for staffing costs, we expect it can be accommodated through gapping.

Eligibility for the temporary pandemic pay to specific positions and workplaces was provided directly by the Province with no real municipal input. Council has the ability to expand such funding to other positions or offer alternative financial incentive to address inequity and/or compression concerns; however, any option outlined would be outside of the provincial funding agreement and likely would not be part of any funding provided to municipalities to offset COVID-19 costs.