

Report to Council

Report Title:	COVID-19 Municipal Response - July 13, 2021 Update		
Prepared By:	Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk		
Department:	Clerk's		
Date:	July 13, 2021		
Report Number:	CLK2021-21	File Number:	C11CL, P03
Attachments:	Grey Bruce Health Unit Media Release: Grey Bruce Designated Delta Variant Hot Spot		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-21 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – July 13, 2021 Update, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk for information purposes and further confirms and ratifies all operational decisions, procedures, and cancellations put in place by staff, and the Municipal Emergency Control Group in response for the COVID-19 pandemic

Report:

Background:

Staff have brought forward 16 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, January to June 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Province of Ontario entered Step One of the Reopening Roadmap on June 11, 2021. Staff shared this announcement on our website, and social media, and further released an [Information Bulletin](#) on June 9, 2021 describing the impact on municipal services and facilities.

Although the Provincial Stay at Home Order and Declaration of Emergency both expired in June, the Orders under the *Reopening Ontario Act* remain in effect. All other public health and workplace measures remain in place provincially as we continue under the Roadmap to Reopen Steps.

On June 30, 2021 the Province entered Step Two of the Reopening Roadmap. Step Two focuses on the resumption of more outdoor activities and limited indoor services with small numbers of people where face coverings are worn, with other restrictions in place, including:

- outdoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to 25 people;
- indoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to 5 people;
- essential and other select retail permitted at 50 per cent capacity;
- non-essential retail permitted at 25 per cent capacity;

- personal care services where face coverings can be worn at all times, and at 25 per cent capacity and other restrictions;
- outdoor dining with up to 6 people per table, with exceptions for larger households and other restrictions

It was expected that the Province will stay in Step Two for 21 days. However, on July 9, 2021 the Province of Ontario [announced that Ontario would move to Step Three of the Roadmap to Reopen](#) as of 12:01 a.m. on July 16, 2021 since key public health and healthcare indicators continued to improve and the Province-wide vaccination rate surpassed the targets outlined in the Roadmap to Reopen.

Step Three of the Roadmap focuses on the resumption of additional indoor services with larger numbers of people and restrictions in place. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Outdoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to 100 people with limited exceptions;
- Indoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to 25 people;
- Indoor religious services, rites or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services permitted with physical distancing;
- Indoor dining permitted with no limits on the number of patrons per table with physical distancing and other restrictions still in effect;
- Indoor sports and recreational fitness facilities to open subject to a maximum 50 per cent capacity of the indoor space. Capacity for indoor spectators is 50 per cent of the usual seating capacity or 1,000 people, whichever is less. Capacity for outdoor spectators is 75 per cent of the usual seating capacity or 15,000 people, whichever is less;
- Indoor meeting and event spaces permitted to operate with physical distancing and other restrictions still in effect and capacity limited to not exceed 50 per cent capacity or 1,000 people, (whichever is less);
- Essential and non-essential retail with capacity limited to the number of people that can maintain a physical distance of two metres;

Face coverings in indoor public settings and physical distancing requirements remain in place throughout Step Three. This is in alignment with the advice on personal public health measures issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada, while also accounting for Ontario specific information and requirements. Face coverings will also be required in some outdoor public settings as well.

The Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit continue vaccine distribution, and re-evaluate distribution plans as a result of available vaccine supply. The Municipality continues to receive updates on the local vaccination plan through the Grey Bruce Health Unit's Vaccine Task Force, and assist in communications and providing support and education throughout the implementation.

The Health Unit continues to distribute communications on the vaccine roll-out plan, including the age groups of those eligible to [book appointments](#) to receive the vaccine. The Health Unit further includes the total number of vaccinations administered on its [Vaccines webpage](#), and in their Situation Reports listing the number of COVID-19 cases. To date 181,452 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce. Several clinics have been organized and promoted throughout the past month to increase vaccine distribution, and with the accelerated opportunity, more people have been eligible to book or receive their second dose. We may also be assisting the health unit with mobile vaccination hubs as required as efforts to expand the ease of access to vaccines through additional locations across the County has increased.

The Delta variant, and increased Grey Bruce case numbers remain a concern. It is important that we all continue to remain vigilant, and follow public health measures for each reopening Step. On July 8, 2021 the Grey Bruce Health Unit issued a [Media Release](#) advising that the Province has designated Grey Bruce as a hot spot for the Delta Variant. The increased risk of transmission requires everyone exercise diligence in reducing the spread of the virus. The Health Unit continues to encourage residents to follow public health measures, and receive COVID-19 vaccinations.

Analysis:

The Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) continues to meet regularly to address each department's responsibilities, requirements, and proactive measures that have been taken in response to COVID-19. To date, the MECG has met 46 times, most recently on June 22, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for July 13, 2021. The Grey Bruce Health Unit and South Bruce O.P.P. also participate in the MECG meetings to provide updates and required information related to appropriate actions in response to the pandemic.

Communications to Date:

The Municipality continues to be diligent in maintaining transparent and timely communication to the public throughout the pandemic. A number of news items, and social media posts have been distributed to residents daily regarding operational decisions, which will be discussed further under the Departmental Responses portion of this report.

Staff continue to spread awareness on the importance of following COVID-19 protocol, advice from the Grey Bruce Health Unit, and the Provincial Government through social media and the Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#). Additional visual/graphic communications continue to be launched on the Municipality's social media accounts on a regular basis. Communications were further shared informing residents of the [Provincial Roadmap to Reopening Plan](#).

The MECG discussed communications that were shared on social media and the Municipality's Community Engagement Website, Build Your Brockton, to encourage a positive atmosphere and provide support to residents and businesses as a result of COVID-19 fatigue. Staff launched a [Coping With COVID project](#) inquiring on ways residents have been coping with the pandemic, as well as a map to pin residents' favourite places in Brockton they have enjoyed while spending more time at home such as restaurants or trails, and a forum to interact with fellow community members. Staff also launched a [Be Active Brockton project](#) featuring recreation activities that residents can participate in at-home, which will be updated with new family activities, games or exercise routines by the Recreation Programmer.

Staff also advertised social media campaigns encouraging residents to shop local using online or curbside pickup to support Brockton's economy, and safety shop inside stores as we entered Step One and Two of the Reopening Roadmap.

The Municipal Office continues to stay open to the public. The Recreation Office continues to remain closed until further notice. Residents are encouraged to contact staff by email or phone for inquiries, and appointments can be made for certain services. Additional measures are included in the Departmental Responses of this report.

Staff continue to broadcast Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings through Zoom Video Conferencing and livestream the meetings to YouTube. A total of 23 meetings were broadcast in 2020, and currently 24 meetings have been broadcast in 2021. The full recordings of both the 2020 and January to June 2021 meetings are all available on YouTube. To date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 1,475 views.

Departmental Responses:

Administration:

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) continues to maintain communication with Mayor Peabody, Bruce County CAO's, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, South Bruce Grey Health Centre, South Bruce O.P.P., and the County of Bruce on regular basis.

The CAO continues to meet regularly with Department Heads and staff to revise any protocols, plans and additional measures that need to be taken to ensure safety. Staff were advised that they must wear safety glasses and a face covering if they are working within 2 metres of each other, and supplies have been ordered.

The Municipal Office continues to remain open to the public with restrictions in effect, including:

- No more than two (2) persons are allowed in the Municipal Office at one time, and must maintain a physical distance of 2 metres/6 feet.
- Residents must wear a face covering when entering the Municipal Office.
- Residents must use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting the Municipal Office.

The new staff shift schedule was implemented, gradually introducing additional staff members back into their workspaces with some alternating shifts still in place to limit the number of staff physically in the office at one time. The alternating shifts began July 5, 2021, and will continue until further notice. This plan continues to remain dependant on local COVID cases.

The CAO and staff continue to share information about vaccination eligibility.

The Walkerton Business Improvement Area has reopened to the public, and is planning a Reopening Event for the local business community on July 16, 2021.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

The Child Care Centre remains open to the public, and staff continue to monitor children's symptoms while dealing with many changes related to screening measures. Staff ensure protocols comply with direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Education, and monitor any COVID-19 cases that may affect the Centre's operations for before and after school programs. The Centre continues to operate programming for emergency workers as per the County of Bruce and Provincial Government guidelines, and are preparing for summer school-age programming.

Regular meetings are held with Health Unit staff and child care operators for ongoing measures.

Building and By-Law Enforcement:

The Building Department continue to process building permits, and are back to normal operations. Staff continue to support developer's plans and a core staff group are meeting weekly by Zoom to advance the numerous multi-residential development projects on the go in Brockton.

Residents are able to visit the Municipal Office to inquire or obtain building permits, or can continue to drop-off or email documentation to limit visits into the Office.

The Building Department continues to respond to all By-Law Enforcement calls. Communications were shared encouraging residents to obey the Municipality's Traffic and Parking By-Law as traffic increases on Durham Street in Walkerton as businesses are allowed to reopen, or continue to offer curbside pickup.

Clerk's:

The Clerk's department continues to process and distribute all communication from the Municipality, and minute all MCEG meetings. All COVID-19 pandemic Reports to Council have been and will continue to be distributed on Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#) to keep the public informed.

As mentioned previously, communications continue on social media to remind residents through the use of visual graphics to follow COVID-19 protocol, and new projects were launched on Build Your Brockton to encourage a more positive approach to the pandemic. Staff continue to adjust communications as needed based on Provincial announcements, and direction from the Health Unit, and continue to monitor legislation for any additional changes to Orders.

Staff continue to administer various Department Head meetings, Council, and Committee/Local Board Meetings through Zoom. Committee and/or Local Board Meetings will also continue electronically through Zoom until further notice. Alternate arrangements are also considered if the majority of members have difficulty assessing the technology. In that case, the Clerk's Department arranges an in-person meeting in a location that allows for physical distancing. All Committee/Local Board Meetings are posted to the Municipal website's Community Calendar to allow public viewing and ensure accountability and transparency.

Staff are bringing forward a separate report to finalize the process for broadcasting Council Meetings on the July 13, 2021 Council Agenda.

Marriage, lottery licensing, and Commissioner of Oath services continue to be offered by appointment. The Clerk's Department ensures that couples and officiants follow Provincial guidelines for wedding ceremonies.

Economic Development:

Staff continue to support and advocate for Brockton businesses and support their inquiries on a regular basis, including working with the Walkerton BIA to collaborate on local initiatives. Staff continue to publish Business Newsletters, support the business community, promote grant/loan opportunities, and update the [Visit Walkerton Tourism website](#). Staff also continue to encourage residents to support local businesses through their reopening.

The Community Development Coordinator assisted the Parks and Recreation Department in setting up the Visitor Centre in Lobies Park.

Contact information is posted regularly on the Community Development Coordinator's ability to assist residents by phone, email or appointment. Programs to assist the business community further are under consideration and will be reviewed as part of the Community Improvement Plan process.

Work on the Economic Strategic Action Plan and Community Improvement Plan is ongoing.

Finance:

Staff continue to review all departments capital projects, budgetary impacts, track financial implications, and monitor capital projects that may need to be revised as a result of COVID-19.

MPAC have begun assessments for new construction and staff continue to assist them. Supplemental tax bills were also distributed to residents in May 2021 with due dates of June 30th and July 30th.

While the office has reopened, residents are still able to drop off payments, or pay bills through Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals, or Online/Telephone Banking.

Staff continue to assist with IT matters to ensure efficiently while remote working arrangements continue.

Fire:

The Fire Hall was reopened for contractors and suppliers to complete maintenance at the Hall, however it is still restricted for municipal staff or firefighter use and has not reopened to the public. Firefighters continue to split in-person training in half to limit the number of individuals present at one time.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services and Fire Prevention Officer/Health and Safety Coordinator continue to communicate PPE requirements to Departments, and have ordered safety glasses supplies to comply with regulations.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services continues to communicate with the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Emergency Management representatives regarding vaccination distribution.

Human Resources:

The Human Resources Department distributes communications and webinars on employee wellness, mental health tools, and staff supports. COVID Policies are updated as required and attending to staffing matters related to the COVID pandemic and vaccine eligibility are ongoing.

The Human Resources Generalist continues to assist with recruitment, and ensures that summer staff are advised on COVID-19 restrictions.

Operations:

The Brant and Hanover/Walkerton Landfills remain open. The Greenock Landfill reopened to the public on July 10, 2021. Residents visiting the landfills must continue to physically distance, wear face coverings, and obey vehicle limits of 10 vehicles at a time at the Brant and Greenock landfills. All residents are encouraged to continue to use curbside collection.

Household garbage and recycling pickup continues as scheduled unless otherwise advised. The Walkerton Recycling Depot (MTO Yard) remains closed to the public, however, cardboard recycling and styrofoam drop-off are still available.

Public works operations and water/wastewater operations remain status quo.

Staff continue to encourage residents to call the Municipal Office with any cemetery inquiries. Cemetery operations remain status quo.

Staff are undergoing many reconstruction projects and continue to comply with public health protocol.

Parks and Recreation:

The Recreation Office at the Walkerton Community Centre remains closed to the public until further notice. However, appointments can be booked for entry to the Recreation Office if required by contacting staff by email or calling 519-881-0625. Residents can also continue to contact staff via email or phone 519-881-0625 during the office closure. There also is the exception to drop-off well water samples between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 1:40 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Walkerton Centennial Pool opened on June 26, 2021 with 25% capacity. Children were required to register for swimming lessons.

Day camp operations began July 5, 2021 and operating and safety plans were created in accordance with Provincial regulations and advice from the Grey Bruce Health Unit. Children were also required to register for day camp programming.

Staff continue to prepare for Step 3 Reopening, and adjustments in increased group sizes, as well as the ability for indoor facilities to reopen and programming to resume in the fall.

Lobies Park is booked up throughout the summer. The campground is operating at half-capacity with distanced campsites to follow public health measures. A visitor centre has also been set up at the campground office.

All facility rentals, recreational and leisure programs, including private bookings are postponed until further notice. The Elmwood Community Centre, Cargill and District Community Centre and Bradley School House Community Centre are closed to the public until further notice. Community Centres are expected to reopen in Step 3.

Staff continue to inspect parks, and maintain facilities. All staff, including summer students, are all trained on public health measures that must be followed to ensure everyone's safety.

All other Parks, Trails, Open Spaces and Amenities remain open. Now that Step Two of the Reopening Roadmap has begun, a maximum of 25 persons are allowed outdoors while maintaining physical distancing.

Staff are assisting any businesses requesting picnic table loans for outdoor dining services which was approved by Council in June.

Staff also organized virtual activities for Canada Day, and continue to plan for additional programming opportunities that can be organized as we continue to reopen, including at-home programming which is included on the [Be Active Brockton project](#) on our community engagement website.

Internal Communications:

Regular internal communications remain a priority to ensure all staff are aware of changes as they occur. The health and safety of staff is a priority for the Municipality. Staff continue to be reminded about the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance throughout the stressors of the pandemic, and have been encouraged to utilize resources available on the Employee Family Assistance Program, and schedule vacation to ensure employee well-being. Time off has been a challenge for much of the Senior Management Team due to the volume of development activity, significant projects and changing COVID protocols.

The Chief Administrative Officer continues to work with staff to ensure updates on the Municipal response to the pandemic, answering inquiries, relay information personally, and thank staff for their continued work in serving the community during this difficult time.

The CAO and Clerk continue to provide updates to all staff through Zoom following Council Meetings to keep everyone informed on decisions passed. Staff continue to hold Health and Safety tailgate meetings through Zoom meetings.

The staff shift schedule was implemented and some staff remain on alternating shifts working one full week remotely and the next full week physically in the office, which began July 5, 2021. Our focus remains on ensuring employee wellness and safety, especially as we navigate the next stage of the pandemic and area mindful of the importance of vaccination to ensure business continuity and a healthy workforce.

Staff are requesting Council's ratification of the operational decisions that have been established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? Yes

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Staff continue to review the financial implications regarding the continued impact COVID-19 has had on the Municipality. COVID-19 financial impact reports will continue. The past reports are all uploaded to the Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#).

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer