

## Report to Council

**Report Title:** COVID-19 Municipal Response - September 14, 2021 Update

**Prepared By:** Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

**Department:** Clerk's

**Date:** September 14, 2021

**Report Number:** CLK2021-29                      **File Number:** C11CL, P03

**Attachments:** Walkerton Fire Hall Vaccination Clinic Poster

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### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-29 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – September 14, 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 18 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, January to August 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Province of Ontario remains in Step Three of the Roadmap to Reopen, resuming additional indoor services with larger numbers of people and restrictions in place. [O. Reg. 364/20](#): Rules for Step Three, was updated to include a Roadmap Exit Strategy Step; however additional vaccination uptake is required before the Province can exit Step Three.

As of September 22, 2021, Ontarians will need to be fully vaccinated and provide their proof of vaccination along with photo ID to access certain public settings and facilities. This approach focuses on higher-risk indoor public settings where face coverings cannot always be worn and includes:

- Restaurants and bars (excluding outdoor patios, as well as delivery and takeout);
- Nightclubs (including outdoor areas of the establishment);
- **Meeting and event spaces, such as banquet halls and conference/convention centres;**
- **Facilities used for sports and fitness activities and personal fitness training, such as gyms, fitness and recreational facilities with the exception of youth recreational sport;**
- Sporting events;

- Casinos, bingo halls and gaming establishments;
- Concerts, music festivals, theatres and cinemas

Requiring proof of vaccination in these settings reduces risk and is an important step to encourage every last eligible Ontarian to get their shot, which is critical to protecting the province's hospital capacity, while also supporting businesses with the tools they need to keep customers safe, stay open and minimize disruptions. This is another challenging aspect to manage with current resources for all of our community centers and libraries with existing staff and various bookings across facilities. A plan will be established to ensure compliance as mandated.

Vaccination receipts can be downloaded from the Provincial website as PDF's. A smartphone app and QR Code will be available as of October 22, 2021. Bruce County Public Libraries are also providing residents the opportunity to have their vaccination receipts printed out for free, and laminated at any library branch. We encourage residents to continue following public health measures as we continue into the fall, and children return to in-person learning at school.

The Grey Bruce Health Unit issued a Media Release on September 1<sup>st</sup> recommending that employers develop workplace vaccination policies to protect their workers and public from COVID-19, identifying organizational expectations for immunization of employees. Staff will be implementing a vaccination policy for Child Care Centre staff as mandated by the Ministry of Education as provided to Council. Staff are also consulting with the South Bruce O.P.P. to gain more information about the possible enforcement involved with the vaccine receipt measures.

The Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit remain concerned about the variants, and continue to encourage vaccine uptake, and adherence to public health measures to limit further spread of the virus. 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, eligibility for booking appointments, educational information about the vaccines, and the many vaccine clinics being offered in Bruce and Grey Counties. Mass vaccine hubs are concluding, although vaccinations will still be available through pharmacies, primary care, mobile clinics, and other methods. 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 228,034 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce.

The Municipality assisted in hosting two (2) public vaccination pop-up clinics in August at the Cargill Community Centre and Elmwood Community Centres which were open to any eligible individuals who wished to receive a vaccination. Staff are also scheduling more local vaccination clinics for the public, including a clinic on September 20<sup>th</sup> at the Walkerton Fire Hall from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### **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 49 times, most recently on September 7, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for September 28, 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 Municipal Office continues to stay open to the public. The Recreation Office is now open but 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 31 meetings have been broadcast in 2021. The full recordings of both the 2020 and January to August 2021 meetings are all available on YouTube. To date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 2,245 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. Department Heads have also met to discuss the impact of the vaccination receipts and suggestion of implementing vaccination policies. Further details for implementation are being analyzed and discussed for implementation.

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 alternating staff shift schedule continues until October 29, 2021 as we navigate the concern of the variants, potential fourth wave, and return to school.

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

**Brockton Child Care Centre:**

The Child Care Centre remains open to the public, and staff continue to follow public health measures, including 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 Ministry of Education introduced new measures regarding PPE, and cohorts, which have assisted both staff and children attending the Centre. Additional meetings are being organized with the Ministry to plan ahead for the fall.

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

The Ministry of Education announced that a mandated immunization disclosure policy is required for all publicly-funded school board employees, staff in private schools and licensed child care settings for the 2021-2022 school year, with rapid antigen testing requirements for staff who are not immunized against COVID-19. Staff will be required to provide proof of one of the following: full vaccination, medical reasons for not receiving a vaccination, or completion of a COVID-19 educational session prescribed by the Ministry of Education. As previously mentioned, staff that are not fully vaccinated must complete rapid antigen testing twice a week. Staff have developed a separate report to Council and policy which is included on the September 14<sup>th</sup> Council Agenda. Child care staff have been notified of these measures, and are aware of the policy that is coming forward for immediate implementation.

**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.

**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, share vaccine clinic information, and Provincial announcements and direction from the Health Unit. Staff continue to monitor legislation for any additional changes to Orders. Staff will also share communications regarding the vaccination receipt measures, and encourage more residents to get vaccinated this fall.

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.

Renovations and audio/visual updates are still being completed at the Bruce County Council Chambers, so staff have met with eSCRIBE to install a remote encoder to host electronic Council Meetings on their software rather than Zoom this fall. Staff were further advised by the County that plans to begin in-person/hybrid meetings in October may be delayed until the renovations are completed. Staff expect that in-person/hybrid meetings at the County may be able to begin in November.

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.

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 is being finalized as part of the Strategic Action Plan process.

Information on the Provincial legislation and changes are regularly communicated to the business community.

#### **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.

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 has reopened for some rental opportunities; however, protocols are in place to maintain controlled entry, and separation from staff to avoid cross-contamination. Firefighters are able to partake in optional training during the summer, but continue to maintain truck checks while wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distance.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services and Fire Prevention Officer/Health and Safety Coordinator continue to communicate PPE requirements to Departments, and have distributed 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, and monitor updates regarding vaccination protocol in the workplace.

#### **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 staff are advised on COVID-19 restrictions. Staff also assisted with the vaccination clinics that took place in August and implementation of vaccination and screening protocols as they change.

#### **Operations:**

The Brant, Greenock, and Hanover/Walkerton Landfills remain open. 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) is open on Tuesday and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 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. A separate report on winter interments has been prepared by staff on the September 14<sup>th</sup> Council Agenda.

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 is open, appointments are encouraged and can be made by contacting staff by email or calling 519-881-0625. Residents can also continue to contact staff via email or phone. Well water samples can be dropped off between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 1:40 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Discussions were held with Community Centre Committees to finalize their reopening plans, with the proposal to reopen after Labour Day. Some events have been scheduled at the Cargill and Elmwood Community Centres since both facilities are able to accommodate physical distancing measures. Staff also contacted ice user groups, and prepared schedules for hockey and skating opportunities. Anyone entering the arena must continue to wear face coverings, and maintain physical distancing, and avoid loitering in the lobby.

As part of the Provincial vaccination measures, residents entering meeting/event spaces, and sporting events must also provide proof of vaccination status which impacts our community centres. Staff are investigating further details on how this measure will impact the Municipality as regulations are not yet released as of the preparation of this report. This is creating confusion for minor sports groups as differing restrictions are in place for Provincial associations such as OMHA. Implementation of these measures may affect staffing schedules to accommodate the vaccination and screening policies and to ensure adherence.

Staff recruitment is ongoing but with current staffing shortages, our management and administration staff will in all likelihood have to alter schedules to ensure compliance with the vaccination passport requirements until a more permanent solution can be enacted with every program, activity or entrance at community centres and meeting spaces requiring vaccine verification.

As of October 5<sup>th</sup> registration will open for fall programming. As of September 28<sup>th</sup>, pickleball will be offered again at the Cargill Community Centre on Tuesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., and on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required.

Staff have also consulted with the Bruce County Public Library to begin offering programming at the Walkerton branch. Restrictions will be in place for residents booking the facility, including a limited number of attendees, distancing, face coverings, and screening protocol.

Staff continue to inspect parks, and maintain facilities and trails, including fall/winter preparation. All staff are trained on public health measures that must be followed to ensure everyone's safety.

### **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. Many staff participated in summer vacations, and have booked fall/winter vacations, although vacations have been a challenge for many of the Senior Management Team due to the volume of development activity, significant projects and changing COVID protocols. Staff are conscious of completing the screening tests when returning to work, and will monitor any changes as a result of children returning to school.

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 alternate staff shift schedule remains in effect until October 29<sup>th</sup> as we navigate the expected fourth wave. The majority of staff are working in the office daily. Our focus remains on ensuring employee wellness

and safety, especially as we navigate the concern of variants, potential fourth wave, and return to school, 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**

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**Respectfully Submitted by:**



Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

**Reviewed By:**



**Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer**