

Report to Council

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

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: December 14, 2021

Report Number: CLK2021-40 **File Number:** C11CL, P03

Attachments: Winter 2021/2022 Brockton Vaccination Clinics Poster

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-40 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – December 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 20 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports from March 2020 to October 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On November 3rd Ontario expanded eligibility for booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to additional high-risk groups.

On November 10th Ontario paused lifting capacity limits in remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required out of an abundance of caution as the province monitors public health trends.

On November 18th Ontario expanded the number of COVID-19 testing locations and access to testing options, including PCR kits as people headed indoors and attend family gatherings in the winter. Additional testing measures are planned to assist schools to maintain in-person learning.

On November 19th the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommended administering the pediatric Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5 to 11 and Ontario expanded Pfizer's vaccine eligibility. On November 23rd parents and guardians of eligible individuals (5-11 years old) were able book first and second dose appointments.

On November 28th the Province confirmed the first 2 cases of the Omicron variant in Ottawa in individuals travelling from Nigeria. The Ontario COVID-19 Genomic Network is continuing to actively monitor for all potential variants circulating in the province, including the Omicron variant, and is conducting genomic sequencing on 100% of eligible COVID-19 positive samples. On December 6th it was announced that the London Middlesex Health Unit are investigating a cluster of probable Omicron cases.

On November 29th the Health Unit issued a Media Release reminder on the importance of COVID-19 daily screening and vaccinations. The Grey Bruce Public Health is experiencing an increase in case and contact management complexity as a result of COVID-19 fatigue. The Health Unit also noted challenges involving individuals not following prevention measures including symptomatic individuals and/or contacts not getting tested in a timely manner, attending work/school/childcare while symptomatic, not completing screening, or not remaining home if unvaccinated while household contacts are symptomatic. It is important that we continue to follow preventative measures and complete daily screening.

On December 10, 2021 the Province issued a [Media Release](#) announcing that Ontario is taking action to further encourage vaccination and limit the spread of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, including:

- Delaying the [lifting of proof of vaccination requirements](#) beyond January 17, 2022, aligned with the reopening plan that stipulated that doing so was contingent on the absence of concerning trends.
- Effective January 4, 2022, requiring the use of the enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code and the Verify Ontario app in settings where proof of vaccination is required. The QR code can be used digitally or by printing a paper copy. Individuals can download their enhanced certificate with QR code by visiting <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>.
- Strengthening the verification process for medical exemptions and clinical trial exemptions by requiring a certificate with a QR code. Organizations and businesses that are under the provincial proof-of-vaccination system will be advised to no longer accept physician notes as of January 10, 2022.
- Effective December 20, 2021, requiring proof of vaccination for youth aged 12 to 17 years participating in organized sports at recreational facilities.
- On the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontarians are strongly advised to limit their social gatherings and the number of gatherings they attend over the holiday season. Additional precautions should be taken if all individuals are not fully vaccinated or where vaccination status is unknown. Employers in all industries should make every effort to allow employees to work from home.

The Province is also launching a holiday testing blitz offering voluntary rapid antigen screening to asymptomatic individuals free of charge.

On December 13, 2021 at 8:00 a.m., individuals aged 50 and over will be eligible to schedule their booster dose appointment. Expanded booster dose eligibility to all Ontarians 18 years of age and older will occur on January 4, 2022, with appointments to be booked approximately six months after receiving a second dose.

The Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit remain concerned about the variants (including the new Omicron variant) 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 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 258,940 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce, and 75% of Grey Bruce residents are fully vaccinated with 2+ doses.

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 52 times, most recently on November 30, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for December 14, 2021 due to the increase in concern related to the new variant. 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. The Departmental Responses section of this report has been shorted to include the main updates that have occurred from the period of October 26, 2021 to December 10, 2021.

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.

The Health Unit continues to advertise vaccination clinics, reminding the public of variants of concern, recommending vaccinations, and compliance with public health measures. There are several clinics being held in Brockton over the Winter:

- November 26th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Cargill Community Centre
- November 27th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at St. Teresa of Calcutta Catholic School, Walkerton (Clinic for Children ages 5-11 Only)
- December 9th from 12:00 to 6:00 pm at the Walkerton Community Centre
- January 6, 2022 from 12:00 to 6:00 pm at the Walkerton Community Centre
- February 3, 2022 from 12:00 to 6:00 pm at the Walkerton Community Centre
- February 17, 2022 from 12:00 to 6:00 pm at the Walkerton Community Centre

These clinics are offering first and second doses to all eligible age groups, and appointments must be booked for third doses based on Provincial eligibility. Staff have advertised these clinics on our website and social media.

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 39 meetings have been broadcast in 2021. The full recordings of the 2020 and January to November 9, 2021 Council Meetings are all available on YouTube. The 2021 meetings received 2,925 views. On November 23, 2021 staff began livestreaming using eSCRIBE, so video recordings are available to view through the Municipality's website calendar instead of YouTube.

Departmental Responses:

Administration:

The CAO maintains communication with Mayor Peabody, Bruce County CAO's, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, South Bruce Grey Health Centre, South Bruce O.P.P., the County of Bruce, Department Heads and staff on regular basis.

The Municipal Office remains open to the public with some public health restrictions in effect. The remaining staff working on alternating shifts until year-end will return to a full complement in January 2022 unless the pandemic situation should worsen. An expanded work remote policy is being reviewed and will be brought forward for Council consideration.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

Staff continue to follow public health measures and direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Education Regular meetings are held with Health Unit staff and child care operators for ongoing measures.

The Ministry has brought back the requirement to take temperatures at the Child Care Centre, so staff are accommodating this update to the screening protocol.

Building and By-Law Enforcement:

The Building and By-Law Enforcement Departments remain status quo.

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.

Staff began livestreaming through eSCRIBE on November 23, 2021. Staff are also finalizing the closed captioning feature, and Vote Manager which will be enabled shortly. Until renovations are completed at the Bruce County Council Chambers, Council will continue to meet electronically until we are able to move to hybrid or fully in-person meetings at the County.

Economic Development:

The Economic Development Department remains status quo and continues to support Brockton businesses. Information on the Provincial legislation and changes are regularly communicated to the business community.

A number of staff assisted the Walkerton BIA in hosting the Christmas Market on November 19th and 20th in downtown Walkerton which was a successful event recognizing our local businesses during the holiday season.

Finance:

The Finance Department remains status quo and continues to track financial implications as a result of COVID-19.

Fire:

The Fire Hall are not accepting rental opportunities at this time, and firefighter operations remain status quo.

Staff continue to communicate with the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Emergency Management representatives regarding vaccination distribution, and protocol. The Fire Prevention Officer/Health and Safety Coordinator scheduled vaccination clinics in the community with the Health Unit during November and December 2021, and clinics are to be held in January and February 2022.

Human Resources:

The Human Resources Department continues to distribute communication and supports to employees.

An expanded work remote policy is being reviewed and will be brought forward for Council consideration.

Recruitment has commenced for a COVID-19 screener to assist at the Brockton Child Care Centre, and possibly at the Walkerton Community Centre.

Operations:

Public works, water/wastewater, and cemetery operations remain status quo. Staff are undergoing many reconstruction projects and continue to comply with public health protocols.

Parks and Recreation:

Staff continue to be busy with programming, and ice scheduling. Anyone entering the arena must continue to wear face coverings, and maintain physical distancing, and residents entering the community centres must also provide proof of vaccination status. Staff are investigating whether vaccination policies should be updated in the future since children ages 5 to 11 are able to receive vaccinations.

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 are reminded about the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, utilize the Employee Family Assistance Program, and schedule vacation to ensure employee well-being.

The CAO continues to work closely with staff to provide updates on the Municipal response to the pandemic, answer inquiries, relay information, and thank staff for their continued work in serving the community during this difficult time.

Staff update meetings following Council Meetings and Health and Safety Tailgate Meeting continue to occur on Zoom.

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?

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| • 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