

## Report to Council

**Report Title:** COVID-19 Municipal Response - January 11, 2022 Update

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

**Department:** Clerk's

**Date:** January 11, 2022

**Report Number:** CLK2022-01                      **File Number:** C11CL, P03

**Attachments:** Information Bulletin – January 4, 2022  
Grey Bruce Health Unit Brockton Vaccination Clinics Poster  
Information Bulletin – December 18, 2021

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### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2022-01 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – January 11, 2022 Update, prepared by Sarah Johnson, 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 21 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports from March 2020 to December 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective December 20<sup>th</sup>, Youth aged 12 to 17 years old participating in organized sports at recreation facilities were required to show proof of identification and proof of vaccination to enter recreation facilities at point of entry.

On December 20<sup>th</sup> the Grey Bruce Health Unit issued a Media Release reminding of the importance of precaution over the holidays, and to stay home if you are sick rather than participating in celebrations.

On December 22<sup>nd</sup> the Province introduced new supports for businesses in response to Omicron, including the Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program (applications open mid-January 2022) and 6-month interest and penalty free payment period (January 1<sup>st</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup> 2022). The government is also exploring options for providing further targeted and necessary supports for businesses and workers impacted by the modified Step 2, including grants.

On December 28<sup>th</sup> Ontario announced that temporary measures would be implemented at long-term care homes effective December 30<sup>th</sup> including pausing general visitor access, and day absences for residents.

On December 30<sup>th</sup> Ontario issued a News Release announcing that further action was being taken to provide additional protection to high-risk settings, safeguarding hospitals and ICU capacity as the booster dose roll-out continued:

- The Province updated testing and isolation guidelines in response to Omicron, including making publicly funded PCR available only for high-risk individuals who are symptomatic or at risk of severe illness from COVID; workers and residents in highest risk settings and vulnerable populations.
- Members of the public with mild symptoms were asked NOT to seek testing.
- The isolation period was changed to 5 days for vaccinated individuals following the onset of symptoms. Household contacts are required to isolate with them. After 5 days if symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours isolation can end. Non-household contacts are required to self-monitor for 10 days. Unvaccinated individuals, partially vaccinated, or immunocompromised individuals must isolate for 10 days.
- The Province had also initially announced that schools would return to in-person learning on January 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Spectator capacity was restricted to 50% at sports and recreational facilities, concerts, and theatres
- Long-term care residents are able to receive a 4<sup>th</sup> dose, and staff, students, volunteers, caregivers, and support workers at LTC s are mandated to receive their 3<sup>rd</sup> dose by January 28<sup>th</sup>

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> the Province [announced that Ontario would return to a modified Step 2](#) of the Roadmap to Reopening. This will stay in effect for at least 21 days or until January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022. This includes:

- Moving school back to virtual learning for 2 weeks (January 5<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>)
- School buildings open for child care operations, including emergency child care
- Free emergency child care provided for school-aged children of healthcare and other eligible frontline workers
- Reducing gathering limits to 5 people indoors and 10 people outdoors, limiting organized public events to 5 people outdoors
- Implementing 50% capacity at indoor weddings, funerals, religious ceremonies, retail settings, personal care services, libraries
- Closing indoor meeting and event spaces with limited exceptions but permitting outdoor spaces to remain open with restrictions
- Closing indoor dining at restaurants/bars, outdoor dining with restrictions and take-out are permitted
- Closing indoor concert venues, theatres, cinemas, rehearsals, museums, similar attractions; outdoor establishments are permitted with restrictions and 50% occupancy where applicable
- Closing indoor sport/recreational fitness facilities including gyms except for athletes training for Olympics or select professional/amateur sport leagues; outdoor facilities can operate but spectators are limited to 50% occupancy

- Requiring remote work for businesses and organizations unless employees are required on-site
- Pausing all non-emergency and non-urgent surgeries and procedures in hospitals and health professionals to preserve critical care and human resource capacity

As of January 4<sup>th</sup>, the enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code and the Verify Ontario app is required in settings where proof of vaccination is required.

Effective January 10<sup>th</sup>, medical exemptions and clinical trial exemptions will require a certificate with a QR code - organizations and businesses will no longer accept physician notes.

The Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit remain concerned about the variants (including Omicron) 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 313,312 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce. 35% of all eligible residents have received 3+ doses, 41% of all eligible residents have received 2 doses, 34% of youth ages 5 to 11 have received one dose, and 69% of youth ages 12-17 have received 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 56 times, most recently on January 4, 2022, and have another meeting scheduled for January 18, 2022. 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.

An [Information Bulletin](#) was issued on December 18, 2021 regarding the Municipality's response to the updated COVID-19 restrictions, vaccination verification requirements, and Provincial capacity restrictions.

Additional communications were shared providing suggestions of how to make the process of dropping off children for hockey safer.

Staff published a [Mayor's video](#) on December 21, 2021 sharing holiday greetings with the community and reminders to be vigilant over the holiday season.

Following the Province of Ontario's announcement that we would move to a modified Step Two January 5<sup>th</sup>, an [Information Bulletin](#) was prepared and issued on January 4, 2022 explaining the impact on municipal services.

The Departmental Responses section of this report has been shorted to include the main updates that have occurred from the period of December 15, 2021 to January 7, 2022.

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:

- January 6, 2022 from 12:00 to 6:00 pm at the Walkerton Community Centre
- January 8, 2022 from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Walkerton Community Centre (Go Vaxx Bus)
- 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. The Health Unit has advised that the Hockey Hub Vaccine Clinics will end January 21, 2022.

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 41 meetings were broadcast in 2021. The full recordings of the 2020 and January to November 9, 2021 Council Meetings are all available on YouTube. The November 23, 2021 to present recordings via eSCRIBE are available to view through our website calendar. The 2021 meetings received 2,944 views on YouTube. Views are not able to be tracked through eSCRIBE recordings.

### **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.

Air purifier systems have been installed at the Municipal Office, and Recreation Office to help with ventilation.

In response to the high number of cases in Grey Bruce and the Omicron variant, the New Years Levee with the Walkerton Legion was cancelled.

With the move to modified Step Two, the Municipal Office remains open to the public; however, appointments for service are strongly encouraged. Residents are also encouraged to pay bills online, through Pre-Authorized Payment, or use the Drop-Off Box which is regularly checked by staff.

Staff scheduling has been adjusted to accommodate remote working arrangements to follow Provincial recommendations to allow employees to work remotely in order to ensure business continuity. The schedule will continue until February 4, 2022. Some staff continue to work regular office hours in on-site as the nature

of their job does not align with remote working. Staff attend the office in-person to accommodate appointments as required.

Critical tasks and business continuity plans have been reviewed for alternates available. The COVID safety plan has been updated to accommodate for the modified step 2.

#### **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 and updates to the screening protocol as provided.

Since moving to modified Step Two, the Child Care Centre remains open; however, the school-age programs are cancelled until further notice in compliance with Provincial direction. An Emergency Child Care Program will be established for children of eligible workers as identified by the Province of Ontario. Individuals wishing to participate in the Emergency Child Care Program must apply through the County of Bruce by emailing [childcare@brucecounty.on.ca](mailto:childcare@brucecounty.on.ca).

Staff were notified on January 6<sup>th</sup> that 26 children are enrolled in the Emergency Child Care Program for local qualified families. The program will begin on January 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Building and By-Law Enforcement:**

Since moving to modified Step Two, residents wishing to obtain building permits can drop off documentation at the Municipal Office Drop-Off Box or, preferably, via email, and can direct all inquiries via email or telephone to Building Department staff.

#### **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.

Since moving to modified Step Two, staff are able to issue lottery or marriage licensing, or offer Commissioner of Oath services by appointment only.

Staff continue to livestream Council Meetings through eSCRIBE. Staff are finalizing additional features such as closed captioning, and Vote Manager. Council will continue to meet electronically until we are able to move to hybrid or fully in-person meetings at Bruce County Council Chambers. Committee Meetings continue to occur electronically on Zoom until further notice.

#### **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. Staff are researching additional information about the Provincial grant opportunities or rebate programs available to businesses.

Since moving to modified Step Two, staff will share communications encouraging residents to continue supporting local businesses and participate in alternate arrangements such as take-out services or curbside pickup where available to limit in-store capacity.

**Finance:**

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

Since moving to modified Step Two, residents are encouraged to pay bills online, through Pre-Authorized Payment, or use the Drop-Off Box which is regularly checked by staff.

**Fire:**

The Fire Hall are not accepting rental opportunities at this time. Firefighter training has been postponed until mid-January, and staff have contacted trainers to discuss alternate arrangements of whether separate cohorts are required to accommodate changes from the Province. Staff received a memorandum from the Ministry of Health outlining steps to follow for working while in isolation for certain critical roles should staff resources become critical. A Policy is being developed in conjunction with HR and the CAO.

Staff have distributed N95 masks (which are not fit tested) to departments as an alternate choice of PPE, as well as monitoring the stock of ASTM Level 2 masks. The Province still recommends the use of ASTM Level 2 masks for employees at this time.

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 which have been advertised to the community.

**Human Resources:**

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

Staff are discussing the Provincial isolation period changes and how that may affect staff requiring additional time off in order to isolate or stay home if they are sick. An updated memo related to the Provincial IDEL program [paid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave \(IDEL\) visit the Province of Ontario website](#) and the [Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit \(CRSB\) visit the Government of Canada website](#). A memo has been provided to all staff. These programs help cover time off for part-time as well with up to 33 paid sick days related to pandemic absences to help keep our workers and their families safe.

Updates to the COVID-19 self-screening form have also been made as the Province has amended its contents again.

**Operations:**

Public works, water/wastewater, and cemetery operations remain status quo currently. However, it is a busy time of year for the public works crew, so staff have begun discussions for business continuity and meeting minimum maintenance standards as a result of Provincial changes.

Staff have consulted with Veolia Water to ensure business continuity. Additional announcements are expected from the Bereavement Authority of Ontario regarding the operation of cemeteries. Garbage and recycling collection continue as usual. The landfill sites and Walkerton Recycling Depot remain open to accommodate residents.

### **Parks and Recreation:**

Some MCEG members met on December 18, 2021 to discuss the Provincial announcement regarding capacity restrictions, vaccine verification requirements, and impacts to recreational facilities. An information bulletin was issued on December 18<sup>th</sup> regarding the Municipality's response, and capacity limits at the arena. Staff communicated with Walkerton Minor Hockey, and updated signage regarding capacity limits and vaccine verification requirements prior to the Christmas holidays. Additional communications were shared providing suggestions of how to make the process of dropping off children for hockey safer.

Since moving to modified Step Two, the Recreation Office at the Walkerton Community Centre is closed to the public until further notice, with the exception of drop-offs for well water samples. Well-water samples can be dropped off at the Walkerton Community Centre between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 1:40 p.m. Monday to Friday. Recreation Department inquiries can still be made by telephone 519-881-0625 or email [recreation@brockton.ca](mailto:recreation@brockton.ca).

All facility rentals, recreational and leisure programs, including private bookings have been 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.

The outdoor skating oval at Lobies Park will be opened to the public (hours and dates to be determined), weather permitting, with users limited to ensure appropriate physical distancing in place.

All other Parks, Trails, Open Spaces and Amenities remain open except those seasonally closed, where individuals must maintain a physical distance of least two metres apart from others and social gatherings are not to exceed 10 persons.

The Cargill and Walkerton branches of the Bruce County Public Library remain open to the public with 50% capacity limits. Curbside pickup is also available in order to limit the number of patrons in the building. Room rentals at the Walkerton Library are postponed until further notice.

### **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.

### Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

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

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| • Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision                       | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community              | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life                               | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment | N/A |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development                          | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance                          | 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, Deputy Clerk

### Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer