

Report to Council

Report Title:	COVID-19 Municipal Response - February 22, 2022 Update		
Prepared By:	Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk		
Department:	Clerk's		
Date:	February 22, 2022		
Report Number:	CLK2022-03	File Number:	C11CL, P03
Attachments:	February 2022 Vaccine Clinic Poster Grey Bruce Health Unit Media Release – Changes to Situation Report		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2022-03 – COVID-19 Municipal Response – February 22, 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 22 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports from March 2020 to January 2022 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On January 12th the Province announced that schools would reopen for in-person learning on January 17th; however there have been changes to case reporting in schools. Due to absenteeism predictions, retired teachers and temporary teaching certificates are being offered to individuals to allow them to accommodate staffing shortages.

On January 13th, the Province announced its investment support for COVID saliva based test kit made by Norgen Biotek through the Ontario Together Fund.

On January 17th Health Canada approved Pfizer's Paxlovid (oral antiviral) for use in adults.

On January 20th the Province released details of steps to cautiously and gradually ease public health measures starting on January 31st, with additional measures on February 21st, and March 14th. Effective January 31st:

- Social gatherings were increased to 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors

- Capacity limits were increased/maintained at 50% for indoor public settings such as restaurants, retailers, non-spectator areas of recreational fitness facilities, meeting and event spaces, recreational amenities, religious ceremonies
- Allowing spectator areas of facilities such as sporting events, concert venues and theatres to operate at 50% seated capacity or 500 people
- Enhanced proof of vaccination, and other requirements continue to apply

However, on February 14th, the Province changed the timeline for the next phase of reopening, issuing a [News Release](#) announcing that Ontario will enter the next phase of reopening on February 17, 2022 including:

- Increasing social gathering limits to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors
- Increasing organized public event limits to 50 people indoors, with no limit outdoors
- Removing capacity limits in the following indoor public settings where proof of vaccination is required, including but not limited to:
 - Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments without dance facilities
 - Non-spectator areas of sports and recreational fitness facilities, including gyms
 - Cinemas
 - Meeting and event spaces, including conference centres or convention centres
 - Casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments
 - Indoor areas of settings that choose to opt-in to proof of vaccination requirements.
- Allowing 50 per cent of the usual seating capacity at sports arenas
- Allowing 50 percent of the usual seating capacity for concert venues and theatres
- Increasing indoor capacity limits to 25 per cent in the remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required, including nightclubs, restaurants where there is dancing
- Increasing capacity limits for indoor weddings, funerals or religious services, rites, or ceremonies to the number of people who can maintain two metres physical distance. Capacity limits are removed if the location opts-in to use proof of vaccination or if the service, rite, or ceremony is occurring outdoors.

Capacity limits in other indoor public settings, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, retail and shopping malls, will be maintained at, or increased to, the number of people who can maintain two metres physical distance.

Booster dose vaccinations will be expanded for youth ages 12-17 on February 18th, and additional measures will be introduced on March 1, 2022.

On February 18, 2022 the Grey Bruce Health Unit issued a Media Release informing the community of the changes made to the Situation Reports as the pandemic continues to evolve and begin transitioning into an endemic status. The media release has been attached to this report for information.

The Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit 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 348,459 vaccines have been administered in

Grey Bruce. 51% of all eligible residents have received 3+ doses, 28% of all eligible residents have received 2 doses, 20% of youth ages 5 to 11 have received 2 doses, and 25% of youth ages 5 to 11 have received 1 dose, and 70% 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 58 times, most recently on February 1st, and have another meeting scheduled for February 22, 2022. The Grey Bruce Health Unit are consulted 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 or Provincial regulation changes.

The Departmental Responses section of this report has been shorted to include the main updates that have occurred from the period of January 8, 2022 to February 18, 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](#).

The Health Unit continues to advertise vaccination clinics, reminding the public of variants of concern, recommending vaccinations, and compliance with public health measures. Staff communicated on the local vaccination clinics held at the Walkerton Community Centre on February 3, 2022 and February 17, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Additional Health Unit vaccination clinics are planned throughout March and April.

Staff continue to broadcast Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings through Zoom Video Conferencing and livestream the meetings through eSCRIBE. To date, 7 meetings have been broadcast in 2022.

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, though appointments for service are strongly encouraged. Residents are also encouraged to continue paying bills online, through Pre-Authorized Payment, or use the Drop-Off Box which is regularly checked by staff.

A work isolation protocol was developed with the Human Resources Generalist and Director of Fire and Emergency Services to have prepared if necessary. There are restrictions as to when the work self-isolation protocol would apply to specific employees.

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. Staff attend the office in-person to accommodate appointments as required, and have begun gradually introducing additional staff back to the office. The staff shift schedule was further extended into March 2022, although the majority of staff will be working full-time at the office starting February 28th, and remaining staff are on rotating shifts (working one full week in the office and the next week remotely) for the remainder of March.

Department heads continue to monitor staffing levels, and safety requirements to ensure business continuity.

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. Changes were made regarding cohort mixing, and testing. Parents continue to comply with the screening protocols, and maintain isolation requirements.

A report was brought forward at the January 25, 2022 Council Meeting requesting an update to the COVID-19 Immunization Disclosure Policy to allow for rapid antigen testing to be completed five (5) days a week rather than the original three (3) days a week for unvaccinated employees. Council adopted the amended policy and it has been implemented at the Child Care Centre.

Staff offered the Emergency Child Care Program in partnership with the County of Bruce.

The Human Resources Generalist and Brockton Child Care Centre Supervisor developed a list of staff who could be re-deployed to the Brockton Child Care Centre if staffing shortages occur. ECE's must continue to work in the classrooms, but if additional assistance is required staff members from other departments can fill in if necessary to ensure continued operations.

Building and By-Law Enforcement:

Operations remain status quo in the Building and By-Law Department.

Clerk's:

The Clerk's department continues to process and distribute all communication from the Municipality, and minute all MECG 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 continue to issue lottery or marriage licensing, or offer Commissioner of Oath services by appointment.

Staff continue to livestream Council Meetings through eSCRIBE. The Closed Captioning feature is now installed for eSCRIBE meetings to remain compliant with the requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. Staff recently completed training on the Vote Manager module for Council Meetings, and will begin using this feature shortly.

Economic Development:

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

Finance:

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

Fire:

The Fire Hall continue to not accept accepting rental opportunities at this time. Firefighters are conducting training in small groups, and will conduct in-house training later in the month. Separation and masking continue to remain in place.

PPE continues to be distributed to departments.

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 distribute communication and supports to employees.

Operations:

Public works, water/wastewater, and cemetery operations remain status quo. Staff also developed plans for business continuity and ensure minimum maintenance standards are met.

Parks and Recreation:

The Walkerton Community Centre and Arena, the Cargill Community Centre, the Elmwood Community Centre, and the Walkerton Library meeting rooms reopened on January 31st in a manner consistent with current provincial regulations that meets health and safety protocols and that follows the advice of the Grey Bruce Health Unit. Recreation facilities operate at 50% capacity indoors per posted room capacities and community members ages 12 years and older, including individuals with an eligible medical exemption, are required to present ID along with their QR code enhanced vaccine certificate at point of entry. Safety measures include wearing a mask at all times except for when on the ice surface and when consuming food and drink while seated, limited to 10 person per table. Physical distancing is still encouraged.

Staff have planned for the impacts that may occur to recreational amenities as the Province continues to reopen this month, and the additional changes as of March 1st including the end to vaccine passport verification.

Staff have also begun to offer additional programming opportunities at the Community Centres as a result of the restriction changes. Staff have been busy scheduling ice time at the arena, and continuing to offer outdoor programming such as the Lobies Park Skating Oval and Cross-Country Ski Trail in Walkerton.

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

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer