

## Report to Council

<b>Report Title:</b>	COVID-19 Municipal Response - February 9, 2021 Update		
<b>Prepared By:</b>	Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk		
<b>Department:</b>	Clerk's		
<b>Date:</b>	February 9, 2021		
<b>Report Number:</b>	CLK2021-03	<b>File Number:</b>	C11CL, P03
<b>Attachments:</b>	Information Bulletin – January 19, 2021		

### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-03 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – February 9, 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 11 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, and January 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Provincial Government developed a COVID-19 Response Framework dividing Health Unit regions into coloured categories with additional restrictions, public health measures, and safety measures. As mentioned previously, the Provincial Government moved the entire Province of Ontario into [lockdown](#) effective December 26, 2020 at 12:01 a.m. for a period of 14 days for Northern Ontario, and 28 days for Southern Ontario. Due to the lockdown, the colour coded COVID-19 Response Framework is paused. On January 25, 2021 the Stay at Home Order/lockdown was extended to February 9, 2021. Orders under *O. Reg. 458/20: Extensions of Orders of the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, S.O. 2020, c. 17* were extended to February 19, 2021.

Both the Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit have established vaccine task forces and have begun distribution. The Grey Bruce Health Unit released their [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) on January 25, 2021 including their three phased approach to immunization in Grey Bruce. Currently three sites are being readied for mass immunization clinics in Grey Bruce, in Hanover, Kincardine, and Owen Sound. Long-term care, high-risk retirement, and First Nations elder care residents in Grey and Bruce Counties received vaccines the week of

January 25-29, 2021, including Brucelea Haven in Walkerton. The Municipality continues to receive updates on the Health Unit's vaccination plan through the Vaccine Task Force, and staff will assist in communications and providing support as the Plan is implemented.

### **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 36 times, most recently on February 2, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for February 16, 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 have been launched on the Municipality's social media accounts on a regular basis.

On January 19, 2021, a new [Information Bulletin](#) was issued regarding the Province-wide lockdown, and the Municipality's response, including office and facility closures, and updated information on service distribution. As stated in the Information Bulletin, the Municipal and Recreation Office closures were extended until February 11, 2021. These decisions are also summarized in the Departmental Responses portion of this report.

A new [COVID-19 Update Video](#) was filmed by Mayor Peabody on January 27, 2021 regarding the Provincial Stay at Home Order and Lockdown and Grey Bruce Health Unit's vaccination response. The video received a total of 749 views on Facebook, and 22 views on YouTube.

Staff continue to broadcast Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings through Zoom Video Conferencing and livestream the meetings to YouTube. To date 27 meetings have been broadcast. The full recordings of the meetings from April to December 2020, and the January 2021 Council and Budget Meetings are all available on YouTube. The 2020 meetings received a combined total of 2,229 views, and to date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 310 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.

Enforcement matters continue to be dealt with by the Municipality's By-Law Enforcement Officer and Fire Prevention Officer. The By-Law Enforcement Officer increased their presence in December 2020 to monitor and encourage compliance with COVID-19 protocol and restrictions within the community. This positive approach to public education will continue as scheduling and weather permits, and once the lockdown is lifted.

Ms. Watson continues to meet regularly with Department Heads and staff to revise re-opening protocols, staffing plans, and additional measures that need to be taken to ensure safety, especially in light of the new lockdown. The Municipal Office remains closed to the public until February 11, 2021; and during this time the majority of staff are working remotely, or are on alternating shifts to ensure everyone's health and safety. Services are still being offered through phone, email, electronic billing payments, or being offered by appointment.

The Walkerton Business Improvement Area Office is closed to the public until further notice but businesses can book appointments to speak to the Manager.

**Brockton Child Care Centre:**

The Child Care Centre remains open to the public. Staff continue to monitor children's symptoms in compliance with direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Education. Staff also continue to monitor the COVID-19 cases in Grey Bruce, and are in daily contact with the Health Unit regarding cases that may affect the Centre's operations; such as the before and after school programs at Walkerton District Community School.

The Child Care Centre also offers services for school age children during the lockdown period and school closures for emergency personnel based on guidelines from the Province and County of Bruce. The Centre continues to adapt to each change the Province announces related to school closure which affects staffing levels and children attending.

**Building:**

The Building Department continues to process building permits. Residents are encouraged to continue submitting or applying for permits via email to the Building and Planning Manager/CBO and Building Inspector. Staff continue to support developers plans and are meeting by Zoom regularly to get projects planned and off the ground.

**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. Staff published a new [Information Bulletin](#) on January 19, 2021 and filmed another [Mayor COVID-19 Update Video](#) on January 27, 2021. Staff continue to encourage residents to comply with the Stay at Home Order, and adjust as needed based on Provincial announcements, and direction from the Health Unit. Staff continue to monitor legislation for any additional changes to Orders.

Staff continue to administer various Department Head meetings 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.

Marriage and lottery licensing services continue to be offered by appointment since the Municipal Office is closed to the public. Commissioning services are suspended at this time. The Clerk's Department ensures that couples and officiants follow Provincial guidelines for wedding ceremonies booked during 2021.

The contract By-Law Enforcement Officer continues to respond to enforcement calls, and provides additional education and reminders of COVID-19 protocol as scheduling and weather permits.

### **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. Additional communications will be shared supporting local businesses, including Takeout Tuesday events organized by the Walkerton BIA, and service club organization fundraisers to promote local restaurants. Business Newsletters also continue to be distributed.

Staff continue to promote and provide advice on available grant and loan opportunities to businesses, including the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. Contact information is posted regularly on the Community Development Coordinator's ability to assist residents by phone, email or appointment.

### **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.

Staff finalized the 2021 Municipal Budget, and monitored feedback received on the [2021 Budget Survey](#) which closed on February 1, 2021 at 12:00 a.m. The January 19 and 20, 2021 Budget Meetings were broadcast on Zoom and livestreamed to YouTube. The February 9, 2021 1:00 p.m. Budget Meeting will also be broadcast through Zoom and YouTube. A separate Report to Council was included on the February 9, 2021 Budget Agenda summarizing the final feedback received from the [Budget Consultation 2021 Project](#) on [Build Your Brockton](#).

Residents can continue to pay bills through Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals, or Online/Telephone Banking.

Staff also assist with IT matters to ensure efficiently while the majority of staff are working remotely due to the lockdown.

**Fire:**

The Fire Hall is closed to outside groups/renters and only available for municipal staff, or firefighter use. Certain training has been identified as mandatory and essential services; therefore, training has been modified to allow firefighters to participate in in-person training in smaller groups while wearing face coverings and physical distancing.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services is communicating with the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Emergency Management representatives regarding vaccination plans.

**Human Resources:**

The Human Resources Department distributes communications and webinars on employee wellness, mental health tools, and staff supports.

**Operations:**

Public works, water and wastewater operations continue as usual, and staff have been busy with winter operations due to the recent increased snowfalls.

The Greenock Landfill continues to be temporarily closed until further notice, and residents are able to attend the Brant Landfill during this time. Physical distancing, face coverings, and the vehicle limit of 10 vehicles at a time remain in effect at the Brant Landfill. All residents are encouraged to take advantage of curbside collection.

Staff prepared for winter burials at the Cemetery, and continue to encourage residents to call the Municipal Office with any cemetery inquiries.

**Parks and Recreation:**

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 phone or email.

The Lobies Park Skating Oval officially opened on January 29, 2021 for residents who pre-booked their timeslots. A [Media Release](#) and [video](#) of Mayor Peabody and Councillor Lang introducing the oval were both shared to promote the grand opening. Staff have received a large number of bookings and inquiries about the oval, as well as numerous engagements on social media. Residents must register to skate at the oval during regular hours, and must complete COVID-19 Screening, wear a face covering, and remain physically distant while on the ice. A maximum of 15 people can be on the ice at one timeslot. Additional information about the oval is available on the [Municipal website](#). Due to the overwhelming interest, the Skating Oval hours of operation will be extended to accommodate more families throughout the week. The Skating Oval will now be open 7 days a week (Monday to Sunday) from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The new hours of operation will begin on February 8, 2021 and will be advertised to the public. A new phone number has also been added to the booking process which provides a direct line to Lobies. Staff have also received inquiries from both local high schools in Walkerton, and are assisting the Physical Education classes in booking timeslots at the oval.

Staff have also advertised a Snow Sculpture Challenge for residents to participate in during the month of February. Residents can email photos of their snow sculptures to the Recreation Department from February 5-13, 2021 for their chance to win a prize. The winner will be announced on February 15, 2021.

Staff brought forward a Report to the January 26, 2021 Council Meeting to decide how to proceed with the ice at the Walkerton Arena. The Report was tabled and will be reviewed by Council on the February 9, 2021 Council Agenda.

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.

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 too exceed 10 persons.

Staff have begun refreshing and updating signage at Municipal facilities and parks, including COVID signage that has weathered over the past few months.

The Programming Coordinator has begun drafting plans for recreational programs that will be offered to small groups following the completion of the lockdown and preparing for summer programs and staffing.

The Bruce County libraries are closed to the public with curbside pickup available.

### **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 holidays to ensure employee well-being.

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.

During the lockdown, the majority of staff are working remotely, or on alternating shifts to maintain municipal services. Our focus remains on ensuring employee wellness, especially as we navigate this additional lockdown and the added pressures it can cause families with children in school at home.

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 were presented to Council in 2020, and will continue throughout this new year. The 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**