

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response – October 26, 2021 Update
Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk
Department: Clerk's
Date: October 26, 2021
Report Number: CLK2021-34 **File Number:** C11CL, P03

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-34 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – October 26, 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 19 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, January to September 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On October 22, 2021 the Province of Ontario issued a [News Release](#) announcing that the Province has created a [Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term](#). The Province currently remains in Step 3 of the Roadmap until further notice.

Effective October 25, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. Ontario will lift capacity limits in the vast majority of settings where proof of vaccination is required, such as:

- Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments
- Indoor areas of sports and recreational facilities such as gyms and where personal physical fitness trainers provide instruction
- Casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments
- Indoor meeting and event spaces.
- Limits will also be lifted in certain outdoor settings.

This means that the Municipality's Walkerton, Cargill and Elmwood Community Centre facilities will no longer be subject to capacity restrictions. Proof of vaccination, masking and physical distancing are still required at this time.

The plan will be guided by the ongoing assessment of key public health and health care indicators and supported by local or regional tailored responses to COVID-19.

The Province also announced that it will slowly and incrementally lift all remaining public health and workplace safety measures, including the provincial requirement for proof of vaccination and wearing of face coverings in indoor public settings, over the next six months. This phased approach will be guided by the ongoing assessment and monitoring of key public health and health care indicators, such as the identification of any new COVID-19 variants, increases in hospitalizations and ICU occupancy and rapid increases in transmission to ensure that public health and workplace safety measures are lifted safely.

On October 15, 2021 the Province launched a free app called "[Verify Ontario](#)" allowing businesses and organizations to easily confirm if a person is fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

As of September 22, 2021, Ontarians were required to be fully vaccinated and provide their proof of vaccination along with photo ID to access certain public settings and facilities. The Province has also begun to launch the app/QR code which allows enhanced vaccine receipts to be displayed on smartphones. Recreation Department staff and the company hired to assist with screening at the Walkerton Arena have been evaluating processes and determining the best path forward as there will be an increased use at the facility this Fall and Winter. The Municipality is also hiring a three (3) month contract COVID-19 screener to assist at the Brockton Child Care Centre.

On September 25th the Province increased the capacity limits for some indoor and outdoor activities.

- Meeting and event spaces (banquet halls and conference/convention centres); sporting events; were increased to up to 50% capacity or 10,000 people (whichever is less) for indoor events.
- For certain outdoor event venues where patrons stand, capacity limits were increased to up to 75% capacity or 15,000 people (whichever is less).
- For certain outdoor event venues where patrons are seated, capacity limits were increased to up to 75% capacity or 30,000 people (whichever is less). This is in recognition of the fact that the risk of transmission is lower because of reduced mobility around the venue.
- In addition, proof of vaccination will now be required in outdoor settings where the normal maximum capacity is 20,000 people or more to help keep these venues safe for patrons.

It should be noted that the increased capacity limits did not affect our recreational community centres due to the limited space in the facilities. However, the Province recently announced that as of October 25th capacity limits are able to be lifted for recreational facilities and indoor meeting spaces.

On September 14, 2021 Council adopted a COVID-19 Immunization Disclosure Policy for Child Care Centre staff as mandated by the Ministry of Education. At this time there was also discussion on consideration of an employee-wide policy. Council has decided not to proceed with such a policy, only implementing the policy for Child Care Centre staff as per the requirements from the Ministry of Education/Province.

On September 15, 2021 Mayor Peabody lifted the State of Emergency in Brockton after discussion with Council, just as Saugeen Shores, Kincardine and South Bruce Peninsula had done in September.

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 Public Health Vaccination Task Force has provided updates that vaccinations are being considered for youth aged five (5) to eleven (11). On October 19, 2021, Dr. Ian Arra advised that Health Canada received a submission from Pfizer to consider their vaccination for this age group. The FDA and Health Canada must approve all submissions – It is expected that these vaccinations may be available by November.

The Health Unit continues to distribute communications and education on vaccinations, and available clinics. 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 240,475 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce, and 82% of Grey Bruce residents are fully vaccinated with both doses.

On September 20, 2021 the Municipality assisted the Health Unit in hosting a pop-up public Vaccination Clinic at the Walkerton Fire Hall from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. which was well attended.

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 51 times, most recently on October 20, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for November 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. The Departmental Responses section of this report has been shorted to include the main updates that have occurred from the period of September 14th to October 26th, 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. Communications were further shared informing residents of the [Provincial Roadmap to Reopening Plan](#).

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 36 meetings have been broadcast in 2021. The full recordings of both the 2020 and January to

September 2021 meetings are all available on YouTube. To date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 2,700 views.

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. A few staff members remain on alternating shifts until the end of the year. The remainder of staff work in the office daily. Our focus remains on ensuring employee wellness and safety with the space we have and ensuring business continuity. We expect to return to a full complement in 2022 unless the pandemic situation should worsen. An expanded work remote policy is being reviewed and will be brought forward for Council consideration.

An anti-vaccination protest occurred on October 12th in Walkerton along Durham Street. Staff and South Bruce O.P.P. were aware of the protest and proactively prepared to assist if required. While the Municipality has a duty to protect staff and Council members, the public are also allowed their right to protest on public property. Staff remain vigilant and continue to encourage a positive and educational approach when sharing communications about vaccinations and Provincial mandates regarding COVID-19.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

Staff continue to follow public health measures and direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education introduced new requirements for Child Care Centre staff which were included within the COVID-19 Immunization Disclosure Policy that was adopted by Council on September 14, 2021 for Child Care Centre staff. Child Care Centre staff are required to provide proof on one of the following three things:

1. Proof of Full vaccination against COVID-19; or
2. A medical reason for not being vaccinated against COVID-19; or
3. Completion of a COVID-19 vaccination educational session prescribed by the Ministry of Education

Those who are not fully vaccinated are required to complete a COVID-19 rapid antigen testing. Staff are participating in rapid testing and maintaining compliance with the policy and Ministry requirements.

Staff also consulted the Health Unit due to cold/flu season and were advised to continue operations as normal. Regular meetings are held with Health Unit staff and child care operators for ongoing measures.

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 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.

Renovations and audio/visual updates are continuing at the Bruce County Council Chambers until at least January 2022; therefore, staff have met with eSCRIBE to begin the livestreaming process through Zoom until in-person/hybrid meetings can be facilitated at the County. Staff hope to use eSCRIBE livestreaming for the November 23, 2021 Council Meeting. This would mean that Council Meetings would occur on Zoom but instead be livestreamed to Escribe instead of YouTube and recordings would be available following the meeting adjournment as usual. Meeting recordings will include closed-captioning, an ability to review timestamps and skip ahead to each agenda item in the recording. Staff are also implementing the Vote Manager software to display votes on Council resolutions in real time.

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.

Finance:

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

Fire:

The Fire Hall is currently not accepting rental opportunities from outside individuals with the implementation of COVID vaccination requirements for meeting spaces. It remains available for associated government and emergency response training requirements and municipal meeting use. Protocols remain in place to maintain controlled entry, and separation from staff to avoid cross-contamination. Firefighters continue to maintain truck checks while wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distance.

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. The Fire Prevention Officer/Health and Safety Coordinator continues to schedule mobile vaccination clinics in the community in conjunction with the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

Human Resources:

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

The self-screening policy was updated to incorporate Provincial changes to the form, and new versions were distributed to staff, Council, and are available for any individuals entering the facilities that are required to submit screening forms.

The implementing of the mandatory vaccination protocols took significant time throughout September to ensure adherence, roll out and documentation.

Operations:

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

Cemetery operations remain status quo. On September 14, 2021 Council approved proceeding with a pilot project for winter internments.

Parks and Recreation:

On October 22, 2021 the Province announced the Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term as well as the change to capacity limits effective October 25, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. lifting capacity limits for indoor areas of sports and recreational facilities such as gyms and where personal physical fitness trainers provide instruction as well as indoor meeting and event spaces. This means that the Municipality's Walkerton, Cargill and Elmwood Community Centre facilities will no longer be subject to capacity restrictions.

Anyone entering the arena must continue to wear face coverings, and maintain physical distancing. 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. Recreation staff consulted with the recreational community, Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Province, and other organizations to draft a plan to implement vaccine requirements. A company was also hired as screener to assist staff in the implementation phase for this measure. Staff continue to evaluate the processes and determine the best path forward. Currently, operations have been running smoothly, and staff have been able to accommodate with the company to ensure health and safety is maintained. Staff had released a COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate Guideline and Procedure explaining our compliance with regulations, and procedures for verifying vaccine certificates for anyone visiting and/or participating in indoor programs at all of our community centres.

Staff have had ongoing discussions with ice user groups to discuss scenarios and vaccine requirements. Staff shifts were adjusted in September to manage the attendance at the arena and ensure protocols and the transition to vaccination requirements went smoothly. Discussions related to ensuring user groups are fully supported and able to maximum ice time available in Walkerton arena occurred with the MCEG and some adjustments to operations will be made to accommodate such use.

Recreational programming is available – however residents must pre-register to attend either [online through PerfectMind](#) or by calling the Recreation Office at 519-881-0625. Pickleball is being offered at the Cargill Community Centre until the week of week of December 20th. Several fitness classes are occurring until the week of December 13th at the Walkerton Community Centre. A physically distanced indoor walking program is offered at the Cargill Community Centre on Tuesdays and Thursdays until the week of December 20th. Child and Youth programming is also offered at the Walkerton Community Centre until the week of November 22nd. P.D. Day Camps are occurring at the Walkerton Community Centre on October 29th and at the Cargill Community Centre on November 26th. A Winter Break Camp will occur from December 20th to 23rd at the Walkerton Community Centre. Skating opportunities are also available at the Walkerton Community Centre until the end of the year. Winter programming will also begin the week of January 10th.

Individuals are able to rent rooms at the Walkerton Library Branch, but restrictions are in place requiring a limited number of attendees, physical distancing, face coverings, screening protocol, and reviewing

vaccination receipts. The staff member on-site continues to check for vaccination certificates from any individuals renting the library rooms.

Lobies Park closed on Thanksgiving weekend and staff are transitioning to winter operations including winterizing the pool and other facilities. 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 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?

- 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:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Johnson".

Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonya Watson".

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer