

Return to the Workplace Plan and Resumption of In-Person Meetings

ISSUE

Administration is providing an update on the timeline and procedures for City of Saskatoon staff working from home during the pandemic to return to the workplace, protocols for staff that have continued to work on site, and for City Council and Committee meetings, currently being held remotely, to return to an in-person setting.

BACKGROUND

Since March of 2020, in response to the Covid-19 public health orders all staff that are able to effectively work from home have been doing so and staff unable to work from home have been subject to masking and physical distancing protocols, among other measures.

Effective March 16, 2020 a resolution was passed at the Governance and Priorities Committee for City Council and Committee meetings to be held remotely, suspending provisions of the Procedural Bylaw to do so. All meetings are currently being held remotely, via the Microsoft Teams platform.

CURRENT STATUS

With over 71 percent of eligible residents over the age of 12 having received their first COVID-19 vaccination, and 49 percent eligible residents over the age of 12 being fully vaccinated for COVID-19, the Government of Saskatchewan implemented Step 3 of the Re-Opening Roadmap on Sunday, July 11, 2021. This means that all Provincial Public Health Orders have been removed, including the province-wide mandatory mask order in public and the removal of limits on events and gathering sizes.

In anticipation of health orders being removed a team of staff have been working to prepare the City for a full return to the workplace and relaxation of measures for those who were not able to effectively work from home.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The City will follow the direction of the Provincial Government and the Re-Opening Roadmap.

In keeping with our values of “people matter” and “safety in all we do” there will continue to be safety protocols in place and there will continue to be task based hazard assessments completed to ensure staff and public safety. It is acknowledged that this

continues to be an evolving situation, and the City must continue to be prepared to adjust as required.

Except for staff that are going to be permanently working from home as part of a pilot program, all staff will be back to the workplace by September 1, 2021. A graduated return schedule has been implemented to facilitate an orderly return and ensure that facilities are ready, and operations are not affected. The need for the City to be able to pivot quickly as circumstances surrounding Covid change is acknowledged, and staff are prepared to do so.

A summary of both relaxation and continuation of Covid hazard controls is below:

Masking

Masks are no longer required to be worn by staff or the public utilizing civic facilities. Based on the results of task specific hazard assessments there may be some instances when staff will be asked to wear a mask. Masks continue to be allowed to be worn in perpetuity.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is no longer required in civic facilities for staff or the public, however where it is possible it is still encouraged.

Cleaning Standards

The current increased cleaning and disinfecting standards will continue. This is a way we can create safer work environments for all.

Fit for Duty Forms

Fit for Duty forms, where employees must declare daily before entering the workplace that they are not experiencing any symptoms of Covid and have not been in close contact with anyone with Covid, will continue. Members of the public are not required to fill out a fit for duty form.

Physical Barriers

All existing physical barriers that have been put in place will remain, however there are no current plans to erect additional barriers.

Point-of-Care Rapid Testing

The City of Saskatoon provides COVID-19 rapid antigen testing to any staff member who chooses to voluntarily participate. This testing helps to identify asymptomatic cases of Covid and prevent spread and will continue.

Task specific hazard assessments will continue to be completed, and additional controls may be implemented in some circumstances, such as employees that are required to enter homes.

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Council/Committee

It is proposed that in-person Council and Committee meetings resume September 1, 2021. Based on organizational direction masking and physical distancing requirements are not proposed to be in place, and full public attendance would be allowed, in-person, in the Council Chamber. To ensure full accessibility for all, the City will continue to livestream all meetings, and provide options for staff, Council, and the public to attend and participate remotely in a way that does not hamper effective operation of meetings.

Feedback on in-person Council/Committee meetings is requested from Council to ensure that the plan proposed by Administration is acceptable and any additional considerations can be taken.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Limited costs related to upgrades to the Council Chambers and meeting rooms to support hybrid meetings are being absorbed through existing project budgets.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Administration will continue to monitor operations for effectiveness as it relates to Covid and adjust as needed.

NEXT STEPS

Administration will bring forward recommended changes to the procedural bylaw at the August GPC meeting to better support hybrid meetings, as the current bylaw does contain some restrictions, and Council is currently operating under a temporary suspension of rules to allow for fully remote meetings. Pending Council feedback, the temporary suspension of rules will be requested to be ceased following the August Council meeting via separate report.

Report Approval

Written and Approved by: Adam Tittlemore, City Clerk

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