

Implementation Plan for the Framework for Measures to Mitigate the Transmission of COVID-19 in Saskatoon

ISSUE

The emergence of the SARS CoV-2 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) resulted in several adjustments to the City of Saskatoon's Occupational Health and Safety and Business Continuity Plans. These adjustments followed the public health directions from the Government of Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan, and local medical health officers to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace and community.

COVID-19 transmission, now driven by the highly infectious Delta Variant of Concern (VOC), continues to affect the delivery of City programs and services and thus requires ongoing Health and Safety measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplaces and community. To assist the Administration and City Council in making evidence-based decisions, the Administration proposed a COVID risk mitigation framework that uses leading epidemiology statistics to inform how and when to impose or relax various risk mitigation measures within the City's legislative jurisdiction at the September 20, 2021 Governance and Priority Committee meeting.

This implementation plan outlines the details of the governance and activation of the framework for measures to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in Saskatoon.

BACKGROUND

At the September 20, 2021 Governance and Priority Committee meeting a recommendation was passed that the COVID-19 Mitigation Framework as proposed in Appendix 2 to the report of the Administration dated September 20, 2021, be approved.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The implementation of the framework includes details regarding governance, how the levels are determined, how the measures will be activated, and the process for requesting support for measures under provincial jurisdiction.

Determining Current Level

Risk levels are determined by the primary indicator statistics outlined in the framework. The indicators are then used to determine the overall status in Saskatoon. No indicator has any greater level of influence in determining status, although higher vaccination rates tend to result in lower case transmission, thereby potentially influencing the results of the other primary indicators.

Determining status levels are relatively simple when three or more indicators emerge with the same colour. However, it becomes less clear when no dominant colour emerges from the analysis. Because the framework offers four primary indicators with four different threshold levels, there is a possibility of several unique combinations emerging. For example, a possible combination could exist wherein each indicator could

achieve a different colour threshold during the reporting period. In this case, no clear risk level emerges so it is less intuitive to determine the status level. In such cases, consideration is given to the previous threshold level, the strength or weakness of the indicator threshold (meaning is it on the margin or is it clearly within the range of the indicator), a review of secondary indicators listed in the framework, and consultation with the Saskatchewan Health Authority Local Medical Health Officers and/or epidemiology experts at the University of Saskatchewan.

Activating Measures

This framework is data driven to address risk mitigation with measures for consideration at each level and follow the hierarchy of controls for increasing risk. Prior to any measure being activated a review of existing Saskatchewan Public Health Orders, the current COVID-19 situation in Saskatoon and a consultation with the Saskatchewan Health Authority Saskatoon Medical Health Officer(s) would occur. In addition, other key stakeholders (ie. Leaseholders, rental groups) will be consulted as part of the review process. As in the past, leaseholder and rental groups will be responsible for their own COVID-19 safety planning when they are not in the public areas of City of Saskatoon facilities or acting in conjunction with City of Saskatoon staff. Measures indicated in the framework are not automatically activated without a review process to determine their necessity and applicability in reducing COVID-19 transmission risk.

At any level, measures directly affecting City of Saskatoon staff safety will be reviewed and implemented by Administration. However, for measures at any level that have a significant impact on residents, Administration will report to City Council regarding the activation of the measure. This report would be informed by a consultation with the local Saskatchewan Health Authority Medical Health Officer(s), any current Public Health Orders, and the current COVID-19 situation in Saskatoon. City Council would provide direction to Administration on the activation of these measures.

The only time that Administration would act without direction from City Council on measures that would impact customers would be if there was a Provincial Public Health Order that supersedes municipal measures. As an example, if a Provincial Public Health Order is activated that requires proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test to access specific locations, programs or services provided by the City, Administration will follow this Provincial direction and provide an information report to City Council.

Process for a Request for Measures from the Provincial Government

The framework for measures to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in Saskatoon includes items that are best enacted by the province. Therefore, should the City resolve that such a measure should be implemented, the City's first action would be to submit a formal request to the Province.

Administration would first consult with the Saskatchewan Health Authority local Medical Health Officer(s). This consultation would include a review of any current Public Health Orders in place, the current COVID-19 situation in Saskatoon, the impact the proposed request would have on the lowering of transmission of COVID-19 in Saskatoon, and any

other relevant information from the Medical Health Officers. If this consultation determines that the proposed request for specific measures to Saskatoon should occur, Administration will bring a decision report to City Council with this background information and the details of the proposed measure. City Council would then provide direction to Administration on whether this request should be forwarded to the Province.

Saskatoon Transit

Saskatoon Transit is a critical service for many residents of Saskatoon. As a critical service Saskatoon Transit will be monitored and planned for separately from this framework. The safety of the riding public and staff are of paramount concern and Saskatoon Transit is following industry best practices, Occupational Health and Safety processes and consultation with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, regarding COVID-19 safety. The Saskatoon Transit COVID-19 safety protocols are reviewed regularly and will be formally reviewed the last week of each month.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the approval of the implementation of the indicators for monitoring COVID-19 risk and the framework for measures to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in Saskatoon.

Activating measures in higher levels of the indicators (orange and red) would have financial implications.

NEXT STEPS

Administration will continue to monitor and report to the public, City Council, and City staff on a weekly basis with updates on the Indicators for Monitoring COVID-19 risk in Saskatoon and current risk level. Information about measures currently in place will be provided. This information will be shared on a weekly basis on the City website.

The reporting will typically occur every Thursday, unless otherwise stated, and covers the status up to the end of day Wednesday. For example, the indicators reported on September 22, 2021 are current to September 21, 2022 (Wednesday).

The indicator analysis conducted for the Thursday prior to the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting shall be the ones that are used to determine the status and potential measures that may be enacted. So, for its September meeting, City Council would consider the indicator status as reported in the September 22, 2021 analysis. The indicators from this analysis reveal an 'Orange' or high-risk level.

Once approved, the measures will be activated starting on the first day of the next month and would remain in place until a review at the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting. For example, at its September meeting City Council would approve the measures for activation that would take place on October 1. These measures would remain in place until October 31. However, at its October meeting, City Council will review the indicator status and either enact maintain existing measures, reduce them, or add additional restrictions to effect for November 1.

Special Council meetings would be initiated as required, should there be a significant event or change to information that would warrant immediate changes in direction.

APPENDICES

1. A Review of COVID-19 Statistics – week ending September 22, 2021

Report Approval

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