

# COVID 19 Reporting Update

## ISSUE

The emergence of the SARS CoV-2 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) resulted in several adjustments to operating protocols at City of Saskatoon (City) facilities and to City Occupational Health and Safety and business continuity processes. These adjustments followed the public health directions from the Government of Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) local medical health officers to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace and community. The Government of Saskatchewan removed the last of the Public Health Orders on February 28, 2022, including those on mandatory face masking.

## BACKGROUND

At its June 27, 2022, meeting, City Council considered a report from Saskatoon Fire and resolved:

1. That City Administration remove the mask mandate on City transit buses (which includes Access Transit), and that the City continue to provide masks, and strongly encourage them for those that want to wear them.
2. That the Administration report back before September 2022 with respect to their intended reporting schedule relating to COVID-19 and any advice from the local MHO regarding needed level of alertness to COVID-19 transmission in our community including seasonal and variant considerations.

## CURRENT STATUS

Effective June 30, 2022, masks were welcomed and strongly encouraged when traveling on Saskatoon Transit. Masks are also welcomed to be worn by people accessing City facilities, including City Hall, leisure centres, indoors arenas, golf course buildings, indoor spaces at the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park & Zoo, and the downtown Saskatoon Transit Customer Service Centre. Masks are available upon request.

## DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The lifting of Public Health Orders does not mean there is no longer a risk of COVID-19 in Saskatoon but shifts the risk management responsibility from the provincial government to individuals, businesses, organizations, and municipalities. Although COVID-19 is still a public presence, Administration has transitioned from an emergency event response to embed safety measures in operational procedures. This includes support in amplifying the SHA's messaging, specifically around COVID-19 immunization, and continuing to provide masks for residents who choose to wear them in City facilities.

Administration has a strong partnership with local Medical Health Officers (MHO) in the SHA. Local MHOs are designated by the Minister of Health and have legislated authorities and duties under *The Public Health Act, 1994*. The MHOs provide

consultation and professional recommendations to City Administration as part of the professional services provided to multiple local partners, including other health care providers, primary, secondary and post-secondary education, community members, organizations, citizens and leaders. They build and maintain provincial and area-level cross-sector and cross organization partnerships and strategy for population and public health. Administration and the Saskatoon MHOs work together on committees, task groups and working groups including the Saskatoon Extreme Heat Response Plans, the Saskatoon Cold Weather Strategy, and events where there is heightened risk to public health which included the COVID-19 response.

Administration has consulted with Dr. Jasmine Hasselback, local Medical Health Officer, SHA, on the City's general approach to COVID-19. Dr. Hasselback has indicated that the Saskatoon MHOs have internal processes to alert residents and partners of heightened risks for many public health issues, including COVID-19. These are processes that are a regular component of the public health system and can be activated when required. Dr. Hasselback has also indicated that their partnership with the City provides an opportunity to quickly bring sectors together if there is a need to address heightened COVID-19 risk at a community level.

Administration will continue to maintain awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on services and the community and work with local the MHO in determining if there is potential for a larger community-based impact. If Administration, in consultation with the local MHO, determines that there is an impact from COVID-19 on service levels, or the MHO indicates that there is a significant public health need, Administration will provide an update to City Council.

Since the beginning of COVID-19, there has been strides made on understanding mitigation and access to vaccination and boosters. Administration will continue to work with the SHA on amplifying their messaging and as required, on vaccine clinics. The priority, at this time, is to encourage all residents to be fully vaccinated and to receive the boosters available to them.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Administration will continue to work with local MHOs and other partners to monitor the COVID-19 situation in the community. When, in consultation with the local MHO, there is significant community need or service level impacts, Administration will provide updates to City Council.

#### Report Approval

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