



City Council approves COVID-19 vaccine policy for Port Colborne staff

Port Colborne, ON (Sept.14, 2021) – City Council approves COVID-19 vaccine policy for Port Colborne staff, students, volunteers, and members of Council.

At last night's Council meeting, staff recommended creating a vaccine policy consistent with the City's corporate values, collective agreement language, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and all applicable legislation to be drafted and implemented.

"This vaccination policy will add another layer of protection to the workplace," said Scott Luey, CAO. "Throughout the pandemic, senior leadership has made – at times, difficult – decisions to protect the health and safety of staff and residents. We are always thinking of ways to limit the potential spread of the virus. This is evident in current policies and procedures, including wearing proper PPE, screening prior to entering a City facility, working remotely, and keeping various City facility buildings closed."

Prior to the last Council meeting on Monday, Aug. 23, 2021, staff discussed a mandatory vaccine policy, but were not prepared to make a recommendation to Council. At that time senior leadership was reviewing legal opinions and consulting with other Niagara municipalities, with no immediate intent to implement a policy. However, within the last few weeks, based on the rapidly changing landscapes of the virus, the Emergency Control Group felt it was best to make a recommendation at the Sept. 13 meeting.

In a unanimous vote, Council approved creating a vaccine policy and have asked City staff to present a finalized document at the next council meeting in a closed session. The policy will require those who have not been fully vaccinated or who have chosen not to disclose their vaccination status; or have not provided proof of a bona fide medical or Human Rights Code exemption; adhere to the following:

- Completion of a mandatory education session
- Adherence to extra PPE measures, on top of the already existing protocols like the mandatory mask policy
- Requirement to attend rapid antigen testing at regular intervals
- If these staff are required to self-isolate due to a potential COVID exposure outside of the workplace, they must use unpaid, banked vacation, or lieu time
- Redeployment to a different work location if necessary, however Council strongly recommends staff being double vaccinated
- Accommodation to point of undue hardship

"The job of City Council is to make decisions we feel are best for the overall wellbeing of this community," said Mayor Bill Steele. "COVID-19 is not over, and we have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of Port Colborne residents and City staff. The number one thing you can do to protect yourself, your family, and the community, is to get vaccinated. I support the implementation of this policy and I strongly encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated."



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MEDIA RELEASE

As the pandemic continues to evolve, City staff are prepared to adapt policies and procedures quickly, and make changes as required by the provincial government and local health authorities. The vaccine policy will be reviewed by outside legal prior to being presented to Council on Sept. 27, 2021 in a closed session.

About City of Port Colborne

Located on the south coast of the scenic Niagara Region, Niagara's Port of Call has found the perfect balance – successful industrial and commercial sectors, comfortable and scenic residential areas, white sand beaches, unique culinary choices, the world class Sugarloaf Marina, fishing, golfing, trails, shopping districts along the historic Welland Canal and an energized festival and entertainment scene that includes live theatre – truly a community that adds to the overall Niagara Experience.

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