

**To: Warden and Members of County Council**

**From: Director of Human Resources**

## COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. That County Council authorize staff to amend the COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy for non-healthcare staff effective April 11, 2022, by removing the requirement for unvaccinated employees and contractors to attend regular rapid antigen testing, subject to improving public health indicators and advice from Southwestern Public Health;
2. And further, that proof of vaccination is no longer required to attend County Council meetings effective April 13, 2022, subject to improving public health indicators.

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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- On September 8, 2021, County Council passed a motion directing staff to develop and implement a COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy (Attachment 1) for employees, volunteers, contractors and members of Council.
- Should public health indicators continue to improve, and subject to advice from Southwestern Public Health, staff will amend the COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy in early April to reflect the current environment, while continuing to enforce all critical health and safety precautions.
- Woodingford Lodge and Paramedic Services will continue to maintain COVID-19 vaccination policies that align with applicable Ministry directives.

### Implementation Points

Should these recommendations be adopted by County Council, staff will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation throughout the month of March, and if public health indicators continue to trend in a positive manner, the COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy will be amended accordingly.

## Financial Impact







There are no financial impacts associated with adoption of this report.

## Communications

Throughout the pandemic, senior management has ensured consistent and transparent communication with all staff and residents. Southwestern Public Health will be consulted prior to implementing any policy amendments and our area municipalities will also be advised of any updated Council direction and subsequent policy changes.

Should positive public health indicators allow us to amend our policy in April, we will communicate accordingly to all employees, volunteers, contractors, Council, and the public regarding any applicable changes.

## Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
<i>WORKS WELL TOGETHER</i>	<i>WELL CONNECTED</i>	<i>SHAPES THE FUTURE</i>	<i>INFORMS &amp; ENGAGES</i>	<i>PERFORMS &amp; DELIVERS</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>
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## DISCUSSION

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### Background

On September 8, 2021, County Council passed a motion directing staff to develop and implement a COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy (Attachment 1) for employees, volunteers, contractors and members of Council.

This policy was developed and subsequently released on September 16, 2021. Individuals were asked to declare their COVID-19 vaccination status by September 22, 2021. Regular rapid testing for unvaccinated staff commenced on October 4, 2021 and has been an ongoing requirement since. In addition, contractors were required to complete an attestation ensuring only vaccinated or tested staff would be permitted to perform work in County facilities.

The County is fortunate to have a high vaccination rate amongst our employees. Since Long Term Care has specific Ministry directives mandating vaccination, 100% of active employees working in our long term care homes are vaccinated. Within Paramedic Services, we have also reached 100% vaccination rate, and among our remaining non-healthcare departments we have achieved a 95% vaccination rate.

We also continue to have a number of additional workplace health and safety measures in place, including:

- Mandatory face coverings;
- Capacity restrictions to ensure physical distancing in meeting rooms, lunch rooms, and other work spaces;
- Active employee and visitor screening protocols;
- Plexiglass barriers in customer facing areas, and;
- Enhanced cleaning practices.

The provincial government has recently announced the lifting of a number of COVID-19 restrictions effective March 1, including lifting proof of vaccination requirements, with businesses being allowed to continue voluntarily. The changing provincial restrictions do not require us to amend our workplace policy, and we will continue to make decisions that are in the best interest of protecting the health and safety of our workforce.

## **Comments**

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to evolve and senior management has consistently stayed abreast of changes occurring locally, provincially, and globally, adjusting our pandemic response accordingly and in the best interest of the health and safety of our staff and residents.

Should public health indicators continue in a positive direction throughout the month of March, and subject to advice from Southwestern Public Health, staff recommend that we amend our COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy in early April to reflect the current environment. This date is being recommended as it will provide us with a sufficient timeframe to monitor the provincial lifting of restrictions, and to communicate any policy changes in advance.

Recommended policy changes include:

- Removing the requirement for unvaccinated staff to attend regular rapid testing; and
- Removing the requirement for contractors to attest to sending only vaccinated or rapid tested staff.

At this time, it is recommended that we maintain the current policy requirement that all newly hired staff be fully vaccinated. There are a number of reasons for maintaining this requirement, including the fact that many staff have to enter our long term care homes as part of their position requirements, and should the COVID-19 situation worsen and/or change again, vaccination remains a critical factor in protecting the health and safety of our colleagues and community. Given that many of our non-health care staff participate either directly or indirectly in provision of essential services to the public, it is of paramount importance that we protect the health and safety of our staff.

Woodingford Lodge and Paramedic Services will continue to maintain COVID-19 vaccination policies that align with applicable Ministry directives.

## **Conclusions**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges as we have navigated new and changing public health directives and restrictions over the last two years. While the pandemic is not over, and the health and safety of our staff and residents remain the top priority, it is important that we continue to monitor changing circumstances and amend our policies, practices, and procedures to reflect the current environment and evolving public health guidance.

## **SIGNATURES**

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### **Departmental Approval:**

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Amy Smith  
Director of Human Resources

### **Approved for submission:**

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Michael Duben, B.A., LL.B.  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policy, March 9, 2022