



**SUBJECT: Repealing COVID-19 Volunteer Vaccination Policy.**

**TO: Mayor and Members of Council**

**FROM: Corporate Communications & Engagement**

Report Number: CC-02-22

Wards Affected: All wards

File Numbers: 155-03-01

Date to Committee: N/A

Date to Council: March 22, 2022

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### **Recommendation:**

Repeal the COVID-19 Volunteer Vaccination Policy, attached as appendix A to corporate communications and engagement department report CC-02-22.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

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### **Background and Discussion:**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City's Leadership Team and Emergency Control Group established a clear objective to protect the health and safety of our community and staff and to do our part to limit the spread of COVID-19.

On September 8, 2021, a COVID-19 vaccination policy for City staff was approved by the Burlington Leadership Team. Subsequent changes to the COVID-19 policy for staff required that all staff had to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by May 1, 2022, in order to work at the City. The change in the policy, which removed the option for frequent testing, was approved in January 5, 2022.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for volunteers, which came into effect in October 2021, along with the Vaccination Policy for City staff, aligned with those objectives and principles established by the City's Leadership Team and Emergency Control Group.

The Volunteer Vaccination policy stipulated that the City of Burlington will require its volunteers to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to access indoor City facilities to undertake their volunteer duties. Proof of vaccination will be required.

The mechanism and implementation of the policy was tied to the use the Province of Ontario's vaccination certificate process in order to verify proof of vaccination.

Since the implementation of the policy, two key items have changed that required a review of the policy and the recommendation before Council.

On March 14, 2022, the City of Burlington COVID-19 Staff Vaccination Policy was amended; staff that are not vaccinated will continue to have the option to test (Fire Department staff excluded).

The decision to amend the COVID-19 Staff Vaccination Policy was done in light of the evolving pandemic situation and messages from the Chief Medical Officer of Health regarding workplace vaccination policies. In addition, as of March 1, the Province of Ontario 'lifted' its vaccine passport requirements along with removing all capacity limits in all indoor public settings.

### **Strategy/process**

In February, the Province of Ontario announced changes to provincial regulations and easing of restrictions. According to the Province these changes were announced due to improving public health indicators. The changes announced included lifting proof of vaccinations requirements in all settings and lifting capacity limits in all remaining indoor public settings.

With these changes announced, City staff have been reviewing all policies that are directly linked to or based on provincial regulations.

One of the first policies to review was the City's COVID-19 Staff Vaccination policy. Once the Burlington Leadership Team made to decision to amend the staff policy, then options could be considered for the volunteer policy.

A key consideration when reviewing the volunteer policy was how the City would regard volunteers, now that members of the public would be accessing City facilities without having to show proof of vaccination.

It was determined that volunteers, when accessing City facilities and taking part in City activities, should be treated the same way as members of the public.

With restrictions being lifted, several City services are receiving inquiries from residents looking for volunteering updates and opportunities at the City.

### **Options Considered**

Align COVID-19 Volunteer Policy more closely with current Staff Policy (including a testing option). In addition to having to provide proof of vaccination, this option would require the use of the eScreener for self-attestation where screening results would have to be shown or emailed to a City representative prior to attending the volunteer activity. Having to pay for testing and the need to use the eScreener may be a deterrent to volunteering. As well, requiring volunteers to submit proof of vaccination does not align with changing provincial regulations and easing of restrictions; therefore, this option was not adopted for recommendation.

Another option considered, but not adopted for recommendation, was to shift to a mandatory vaccination policy for volunteers, but with the use of the City's eScreener. Instead of collecting proof of vaccination, volunteers would have to attest on the eScreener that they are vaccinated. This option was not adopted as it would seem more restrictive than the current Staff Vaccination Policy. As well, it would be based on a honour system as there would be no practical way to verify if someone was vaccinated.

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### **Financial Matters:**

Not applicable.

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### **Climate Implications**

Not applicable.

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### **Engagement Matters:**

The City's Human Resources department (Health, Safety and Wellness) was consulted on this change in policy.

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### **Conclusion:**

Since the implementation of the COVID-19 Volunteer Vaccination Policy in October 2021, two key items have changed that required a review of the policy and the recommendation before Council. The City's COVID-19 vaccination policy for staff has been amended and the Province has eased restrictions, including ending the requirement to show proof of vaccination in all indoor public settings.

With these two changes, staff believe volunteers should be viewed as members of the public who want to access City facilities. Staff will continue to monitor and assess the

local epidemic situation as it continues to evolve, including public health guidance and/or regulatory requirements; and will be prepared to recommend policy changes, as necessary.

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Respectfully submitted,

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**Appendices:** (if none delete section)

A. COVID-19 Volunteer Vaccination Policy

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.