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Council suspends mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy following vote

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The Town of Shelburne is suspending it's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy for staff, councillors, and committee board members.

On Monday (July 11), Shelburne Town Council revisited their COVID-19 vaccine policy after deferring the matter backin March.

A report to council from Shelburne's chief administrative officer (CAO), Denyse Morrissey, recommended for the policy to be suspended based on input from staff members, the discontinuation of COVID-19 restrictions, and many employers having suspended vaccine policies and re-hiring staff.

Staff members were consulted with from June 17 until June 29, and asked whether the Town should keep the vaccination policy for staff in place, including for new staff hires.

According to the report, 16 staff members responded ?no? to keeping the vaccine policy while 13 staff members voted ?yes? in favour of its continuation.

?The majority of staff, even though it was quite close, indicated that they would support the vaccination being discontinued for now,? said Morrissey

She also noted the decision to suspend the vaccine policy rather than terminate it due to the possibility of a seventh wave.

The mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy that applies to Shelburne staff members, including third-party contractors, went into effect in November 2021.

The vaccination policy required town staff members to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or a medical exemption by Nov. 26, 2021. Staff members who chose not to provide proof would need to perform rapid antigen testing a minimum of twice weekly to verify a negative result for COVID-19.

A report given to Council in March stated that 96 per cent or 24 of 25 full-time staff members provided proof of full vaccination, while 95 per cent or 21 of 22 part-time staff presented proof of full vaccination.

It was also recommended that the vaccination policy for councillors and committee board members be suspended.

?I'm fine with the council and board committee policy aligning with staff. I think that was the intention from the get go,? said Mayor Wade Mills. ?Whatever we are asking of the staff we should be prepared to ask of ourselves, and if we are suspending the staff policy then I think it only makes sense that the other policy aligns with that.?

Masks are no longer mandatory for town staff, but Town Hall remains ?mask friendly? for those who prefer to wear them.

The Town can reinstate the vaccine policies for staff, council, and committee board members if it feels that it is required.