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Council to soon decide on mandatory COVID-19 vaccine policy

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Shelburne Town Council will be considering a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy for all town staff in their upcoming meeting on Sept. 13.

During their regular council meeting on Aug. 23, Shelburne Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson suggested bringing the motion to council as other municipalities in the province make moves to implement a policy.

?It's important that we turn our minds to what we're going to be doing as a number of municipalities introduce this sort of policy. The rational in quite simple, which is to keep people safe. As public officials we're expected to be out and engaging with the community young, old, and in between and as leaders we have a responsibility to set the example when it comes to making sure that our community is safe,? Anderson tells the Free Press.

The motion being put forward by Anderson is to have town staff investigate the feasibility of a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy and for it to apply to all current staff, elected officials, and new hires.

The Town of Shelburne based on the 2021 budget has 26 full-time employees, plus two vacant positions in hiring process, six seasonal or contract employees, and 10 part-time crossing guards. Staff at the local library, fire department, and recreation centre are not considered town employees.

In his original motion presented to council, Anderson asked staff to come back with a report by January of next year, but recently told the Free Press that based on the fluctuating cases in Dufferin County with a fourth wave, he will be asking for implementation of the policy as soon as possible.

The Town of Orangeville has also not yet implemented a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy for staff, but CAO Ed Brennan said officials are considering the option.

?Town official are considering a vaccination policy to ensure a safe working environment for all staff and members of the public who visit our facilities or use our services,? wrote Brennan in an email.

He added that the Town will announce any decision related to mandatory vaccines for employees once a decision is made on a plan.

In the past two weeks Peel Region and Toronto have both announced their employee vaccination policy with Toronto requiring all staff to provide proof of vaccination status by the end of October.

The Ontario government on Aug. 17 also announced they were making COVID-19 vaccination policies mandatory in high-risk settings including hospitals, post-secondary institutions, schools, licensed retirement homes, congregate group homes and day programs for adults, and women's shelters.

In the last few weeks the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health region has seen a steady increase in COVID-19 case numbers. As of Sept. 1 there are 106 cases in WDG with 24 cases in Dufferin County.

Shelburne Town Council will next meet on Sept. 13, when councillors are expected to vote on the motion.