

March 17, 2022

## **City suspends staff COVID-19 immunization policy**

The internal immunization policy that applies to all City of Red Deer staff is suspended starting today, March 17. The policy was originally implemented on October 5, 2021, as an added layer of protection to reduce transmission and minimize symptom severity to protect the healthcare system and maintain essential City services.

### **1. Why is the immunization policy for staff being suspended?**

There has been a shift in the pandemic response over the past several weeks to learn to live with the virus. The decision to suspend the policy is reflective of this shift. The policy contributed to the safety of The City's workplaces and lessened the impact of COVID-19 for staff, which resulted in minimal impacts to service delivery over the past five months.

### **2. Why suspend the policy and not eliminate it?**

The decision to suspend rather than eliminate the policy speaks to our inability to foresee what COVID-19 may hand us in the future; it reserves the ability to re-implement the policy if the hazard level and situation warrants it.

### **3. Can staff continue to provide immunization records?**

While the policy is suspended staff are not required to provide proof of immunization.

### **4. If a staff member is experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms, do they require testing?**

No. Testing is not required as part of employment requirements, however, if a staff member is experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms or tests positive, they are required to be referred to The City's Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) and to stay home until they have been cleared by the OHN.

### **5. Will there still be measures in place to help keep staff safe from COVID-19?**

The City is taking a cautious approach to easing of internal measures and return to the office. Although some measures such as masking, physical barriers and gathering limits are being eased in the coming weeks, The City will continue to monitor the situation, and adjust as needed. The City also requires any staff who are sick to stay home, and masks will be available to those who wish to continue to wear them or are required to for their job or location.

### **6. Are there instances where masking is still required for staff or public in Red Deer?**

Although starting next Monday masking will no longer be required by City staff, some may choose to still wear them. There are also continued provincial measures in place that require staff and the public to wear a mask. Currently masks are still required on municipal and intra-provincial public transit for Albertans 13 years and older, and at AHS-operated and contracted facilities and all continuing care settings. For Transit services in Red Deer, this means that all riders over 13 years and Transit operators must continue to mask when on our buses.

Private businesses can also implement mandatory masking in their establishment, and we ask that those visiting those businesses respect their policies in place.

### **For more information, contact:**

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