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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)  
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Subject: [Update: COVID/weather response](#)

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Greetings Mayor and Council,

I am writing to provide an update on our weather response and planning for the coming days, as well as an update on our pandemic response.

As you will have heard, the Province has delayed the start of school to January 10 to provide educators with time to plan for re-implementation of COVID safety measures in schools. That delay has obvious implications for the many City staff with young children. Although school districts are providing only limited information at this time, we understand the children of essential workers are able to attend school next week if necessary. We are asking our staff to take all possible steps to ensure they are available to work next week if they have shifts scheduled.

Consistent with the advice from the PHO, we are also re-establishing enhanced COVID safety protocols in City workplaces. We have deferred the implementation of our flexible work program such that employees who are able to work from home will retain that option. Masks will be required in all City workplaces, except when employees are stationary and can maintain 2m distance from others. Masks are also required for employees travelling together in City vehicles and working outdoors in close proximity.

Not surprisingly, we are seeing a significant increase in the number of staff who are testing positive for COVID or who are symptomatic and unavailable for work. To this point, we have not experienced significant service impacts as a result of staffing shortages but some of our operations are now encountering challenges to maintain service levels. As many other employers are reporting, we anticipate a high likelihood of some service impact in the coming weeks given reduced staff availability. As one positive development, the PHO has reduced the isolation period for symptomatic cases from 7 days to 5 days, provided the individual is well enough to return to work and remains masked at all times for a further 5 days.

As previously indicated, the City's mandatory vaccination policy takes effect on January 7. As of today, there are 165 employees (approximately 2% of the workforce) who have not provided proof of vaccination and who will be deemed ineligible to work as of January 7. That proportion is generally consistent with the number of unvaccinated staff in other organizations/sectors that have implemented similar policies and we do not anticipate this policy will exacerbate in any material way the overall staffing pressures we are facing.

With respect to our weather response, we receive a briefing from Environment Canada at our daily coordination/planning meeting. The short-term forecast is very unsettled but ECCC is predicting that the next precipitation event will commence Saturday with snow volumes of 2-10cm, transitioning to warming temperatures and substantial rainfall at some point on Sunday.

Our warming centres, downtown community centres and shelters are seeing increasing usage, with high demands on our downtown community centres during daytime hours. Staffing is increasingly challenging for these operations but they are maintaining services presently. Rangers are continuing to attend CRAB Park on a daily basis to conduct wellness checks and support anyone staying there who is looking to move indoors.

The cold temperatures are continue to generate a high volume of service calls for Waterworks due to main breaks. VFRS is also receiving many calls related to broken pipes and associated alarms and has adjusted its resource assignments for those calls to manage the volume.

Our other Engineering crews are focusing today on removing any remaining snow/ice from priority routes and hand salting pedestrian routes. We are also finalizing deployment plans for the next two days, taking into account the uncertainty regarding weather conditions.

We will keep you apprised of further developments over the coming days but please let me know if you have any questions or concerns at this point.

Finally, best wishes for a safe and happy 2022!

Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.