

Q and As

TOPIC: Workplace Re-entry and Reopening – City Hall and the Joint Operations Centre

DATE: April 19, 2022 - REVISED – Aug. 3, 2022

WORKPLACE RE-ENTRY

Safety

Do I need to wear a face mask in the workplace?

Based on the recommendation of Dr. B. Pakes, York Region Medical Officer of Health, it is **strongly recommended** that masks be worn when in close contact with other people, in confined spaces or in crowded areas. As well, some people must take extra precautions if they are immunocompromised or live with someone who is. There may be some circumstances in which an employee will be required to wear a mask due to the nature of their work. For example, when they enter a person's home or business.

When would an employee be required to wear a mask?

Based on the recommendation of Dr. B. Pakes, York Region Medical Officer of Health, it is **strongly recommended** that masks be worn when in close contact with other people, in confined spaces or in crowded areas. This includes instances where staff will require masks in certain settings, such as, but not limited to, By-law, Building Standards, Public Works and any other employee who may need to enter a resident's home. It also includes any other situations where departments have determined that a mask would be required based on their own individual risk assessment:

- For staff whose duties require they enter a home/dwelling for any City purpose (e.g., inspections, etc.), masks and hand sanitizer will continue to be provided.
- Staff are required to wear a mask when entering a resident's home/property or when asked to do so by a homeowner/occupant.
- Staff may be required to wear a mask if a business has chosen to maintain a mask policy.
- Staff may be asked to wear a mask if necessary to protect persons who are vulnerable or immunocompromised.
- As a precautionary measure, before entering a home/dwelling, staff may ask the homeowner/occupant if anyone in the home is ill, and, if so, may offer to reschedule if necessary.

Am I required to wear a mask when returning from international travel and going back to work at a City facility?

International travel is governed by federal government regulations. City staff returning from international travel are required to follow directions provided by the federal government and any specific instructions provided by federal border agents. Travel rules around vaccination, masking and self-isolation/quarantine change frequently. Staff are advised to check the [federal government's website](#) often for the most up-to-date guidance and fully adhere to all direction provided.

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Will the City provide face masks for employees who want to wear them at City facilities?

The City will be offering face masks to staff and members of the public who enter City facilities. For City staff, notify your supervisor, manager or director and they will work with Procurement to secure the supplies needed.

Will staff still be required to complete the online screening assessment prior to entering the workplace?

Yes. The City is re-establishing the use of its [online COVID-19 screening assessment for staff](#) before entering any City of Vaughan facility as of Monday, Aug. 8.

This means:

- any employee working at a City facility must complete the online form prior to entering the building.
- if you have a City of Vaughan email, you can continue to fill out the screening questionnaire before attending a City facility. This includes outdoor or partially outdoor workplaces. The link will also work for employees who do not have a City-issued phone or laptop.
- part-time or seasonal staff, or external contractors, who do not have an assigned City of Vaughan email, must fill out the [external screening questionnaire](#) form before entering a City facility. A City contact, such as a director, manager or supervisor, must provide the external questionnaire link before the staff member or contractor arrives at the City facility. If your department has contractors attending City facilities, you must ensure that contractors know their responsibilities before attending City worksites.

What safety precautions are in place to keep me safe from COVID-19 in the workplace?

The City has taken many steps to enhance safety measures in the workplace. These include:

- air temperature, humidity, pressure and higher efficiency MERV 13 and HEPA filters
- fresh outside makeup air increased where possible
- more than 200 ultraviolet units installed on the air management units across the building inventory
- enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols
- automatic no-touch hand-sanitizing stations located outside departments in common areas and in front of elevators
- standing wipe dispensers outside department areas beside the entrances
- Mandatory Vaccination Policy

I'm worried about re-entering the workplace with so many of my colleagues. Isn't this risky?

We understand your concerns and want to reiterate that actions have been taken to ensure the workplace is as safe as possible. The goal for now is to have approximately 50 per cent of staff from each department reporting for work onsite at any given time to avoid overcrowding. People Leaders will work with their teams to schedule when and where people work.

My concerns about returning to the workplace are impacting my mental health. What resources are available?

Being concerned about this pandemic is normal. You may be experiencing feelings of discomfort, impacting concentration, productivity and even disrupting sleep patterns. The City has many resources

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available to help you through the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) which can be accessed through LifeWorks at workhealthlife.com or by calling 1-844-880-9142 to speak confidentially to a Morneau-Shepell (LifeWorks) counsellor. The quarterly Making Connections newsletter from HR and the Wellness@Vaughan VOL page also have many wellness resources that may be of interest to you.

What will happen if a new variant emerges and COVID-19 case counts spike again – like with Omicron?

As we have done since the start of the pandemic, the City of Vaughan Emergency Management Team and Health and Safety staff will continue to closely follow the guidance and direction of public health officials as well as monitor the trends of COVID-19 and make further adjustments as required. This could include returning to a primarily work-from-home approach or the implementation of additional safety measures.

What?

What is the plan to return more staff to working out of City Hall and the Joint Operations Centre?

On April 19, 2022, the City moved into the next phase of business reintegration with the re-entry of more staff into the workplace. This gradual and flexible approach welcomed back at any given time approximately 50 per cent of staff from each department who have been working remotely. For now, work locations and scheduling will be determined by your People Leader. In this new normal, staff may experience a temporary “hybrid model” in terms of their work locations, operating from home and from City Hall, the JOC or other City premises. The City’s formal Alternative Work Arrangements Program (AWA) plans will be rolled out in the fall to all staff.

How many days a week will each employee work from City Hall or the Joint Operations Centre?

For now, re-entry into the workplace will be guided by flexibility. Your People Leader will work with you to determine when and how often you work from the office or other City locations. This will vary depending on the needs of both the employee and the department’s operations. On average, staff who have been working from home during the pandemic can expect to be in the workplace two-to-three days a week with a staggered approach to allow departments to achieve approximately 50 per cent capacity.

Why?

I have been highly productive working from home for the last two years. So why did I need to return to work in person?

Working from home was a temporary measure implemented by the City to respond to the global pandemic. City Hall, the JOC and other City-locations are the primary places where City business is conducted. Also, returning to the workplace after COVID-19 allows for more opportunities for meetings and information sharing and enables effective team- and relationship-building with co-workers. Meeting new co-workers in person for the first time and/or reuniting with co-workers in person is an important step as we continue to create a strong workplace culture and move out of the pandemic. Recognizing that many staff work effectively from home, the City is reviewing work arrangements to continue to deliver Service Excellence while also promoting work-life balance, where operationally feasible.

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Why was April 19 chosen as the return to the workplace date?

Since the beginning of the global pandemic, the City's response to COVID-19 – including decisions about closing and opening facilities and amenities – has been informed by Vaughan-specific data and reflects guidance issued by York Region Public Health and the Provincial government, with public and staff safety being the top priority. Many workplaces, including municipalities, are bringing more people back into the office – including the Provincial Government. With the temporary hybrid approach, staff will continue to deliver Service Excellence while benefiting from a flexible work-life balance.

Was the April 19 return of more employees Phase 2 of the Business Reintegration Plan?

Due to the ever-evolving nature of this pandemic, the Business Reintegration Plan (BRP) is flexible and evolving as well. The return of approximately 50 per cent of staff in each department aligns, for the most part, with Phase 2 of the original plan.

Who?

How was it decided which staff would be returning to the workplace?

As an organization, we are reviewing work arrangements. Your People Leader will work with you to determine when and how often you work from the office, including which workspace you will be assigned to. This will vary depending on the needs of both the employee and the department's operations. Employees will no longer work remotely 100 per cent of the time.

Where?

Last year, I completed a survey with my department about my workplace preference. What is being done with these results?

That survey has helped inform the reintegration of more staff to working out of City Hall and the Joint Operations Centre. As an organization, we are reviewing work arrangements with a focus on the operational requirements of each department.

Hoteling stations

What are hoteling stations?

A hoteling station is a workplace designed for short-term or temporary use. Currently, there are 22 hoteling stations at City Hall on the lower level outside the Office of the Chief Information Officer. The City is looking for opportunities to provide additional hoteling stations in the future.

How do I book a hoteling station?

With approximately 50 per cent of staff returning to City Hall, it is not anticipated there will be a high demand for hoteling stations as there will be space for staff in each department. If you require a hoteling station, they can be booked via Outlook using the Hoteling Station Number. The availability of hoteling stations is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Will disinfecting materials, such as sanitization wipes and hand sanitizer, be available at hoteling stations?

Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes are available throughout the facilities and located in common areas.

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If I'm working at a hoteling station, will that workstation's phone be programmed to my name?

No. Workstation phones will not be reprogrammed. You may use a workstation's phone if one is available at a hoteling station within your department. The majority of City departments have been migrated to Teams softphone technology, in which calls can be made and received using the Microsoft Teams app through your laptop/desktop.

My former work location is being turned into a hoteling station. What do I need to do?

If you are notified that your desk is transitioning into a hoteling station, please take home your personal items such as photos, plants, books, etc. All equipment assigned to the station – including the phone, monitor, chair, etc. – must be left at the station. Laptop docking stations can remain with the laptop owner.

Accommodations

I need an accommodation. Whom should I contact?

Employees who need an accommodation because of a disability, family status or other human rights grounds, should contact their People Leader and Human Resources.

I have personal obligations that will be impacted by returning to the workplace (such as a scheduled time to pick up a child from school). How will this be handled?

This gradual re-entry into the workplace will be guided by flexibility and business requirements. Please speak to your People Leader to create a schedule that will work best for both you and the department. In the example of a child needing to be picked up at a specific time from school, where after school programs or resources may be limited, staff can request a change in their work schedule to allow them to meet their obligations to their family and their work. People Leaders will consider all requests along with the requirements of the department.

Furniture

I've taken home my monitor and chair to work from home properly. Do I need to return this to the workplace even though I'm working both there and at home?

You must return your monitor and chair to the workplace. These are the property of the City and will need to be returned. Smaller items, such as keyboards and mouses, may stay in your home office with approval from your People Leader.

Amenities

Will meeting rooms be available for use?

Yes. The rooms will be available for booking via Microsoft Outlook. Some meeting rooms have been equipped with technology to allow for hybrid meetings to accommodate both those working from the office and from home. OCIO also provides the opportunity for meeting organizers to purchase a Microsoft Teams Audio Conferencing licence to allow staff to dial into meetings if required.

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Will the cafeteria and fitness centre at City Hall and the JOC be open?

Yes. The fitness centre is open. The City is working to reinstate full food services at City Hall – timing of an opening is to be determined.

Mandatory Vaccination Policy

Is the Mandatory Vaccination Policy for staff and volunteers still in effect?

Yes. Ensuring our workforce, including volunteers, is vaccinated against COVID-19 remains a critical layer of safety within our organization. COVID-19 remains a fluid and unpredictable situation and the City will continue to exercise caution in our approach to managing the associated safety precautions. We continue to monitor the impact that the easing of restrictions has on the City and will re-evaluate our measures when appropriate.

Notification and attendance

Will I be notified if any of my colleagues in the office are diagnosed with COVID-19?

Given changes to case and contact tracing management by the Ministry of Health, the City will continue to track cases, but the reporting protocols have changed. Those in close contact with a COVID-19 colleague will be notified directly and provided instructions on next steps.

I have tested positive for COVID-19. Will any related sick absences be considered part of the Attendance Management Program?

Yes. As of April 19, all sick days taken by employees will count towards the Attendance Management Program.

I have tested positive for COVID-19. Do I need to notify my People Leader?

Yes, please notify your People Leader if you test positive for COVID-19.

Do I need to provide a sick note if my absence relates to COVID-19?

A medical note will be required for all prolonged absences – exceeding three days – including for cases of COVID-19.

I have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. Should I stay home?

Effective March 9, 2022, non-household close contacts are no longer required to self-isolate if they are asymptomatic. They must, however, monitor for symptoms and wear a mask in public settings and close contact situations for 10 days. If the close contact is with a household member, you must self-isolate along with the ill member of the household unless the following criteria are met: you are 18+ years of age and boosted, you have previously tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days or you are under 18 and fully vaccinated (two doses). Do not come to work if you are unwell and exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Depending on your condition and work responsibilities, you may be able to work from home. Please contact your People Leader to report your illness/absence and determine next steps.

I am not feeling well. What should I do?

If you are unwell, do not come to work. Depending on your condition, you may be able to work from home. Please contact your People Leader to report your absence and determine next steps.

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REOPENING TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Logistics

When did City Hall and the JOC reopen to the public?

On May 2, 2022, City Hall reopened to members of the public. The JOC has been open to the public by appointment only. The Public Works counter service at the JOC will not resume.

Why was this date chosen?

Since the beginning of the global pandemic, the City's response to COVID-19 – including making decisions about closing and opening facilities and amenities – has been informed by Vaughan-specific data and reflects guidance issued by York Region Public Health and the Provincial government, with public and staff safety being the top priority. The May 2 date was no exception.

Proof of vaccination and screening

Do members of the public who come to City Hall for in-person service need to be vaccinated? Will safety measures, like temperature checks, be conducted before staff and the public enter City Hall?

Members of the public visiting a City facility must follow directives set by the Province of Ontario and York Region Public Health. At this time, that does not include providing proof of vaccination or temperature checks. Members of the public visiting City Hall will be required to self-screen for symptoms prior to entering the building. Posters will be prominently posted on main doors to alert visitors of this requirement. Members of the public should not enter if they fail the self-screening.

Committee and Council meetings

When did in-person meetings resume?

On May 3, 2022, the Committee of Whole (1) meeting at 1 p.m., Committee and Council meetings transitioned to a hybrid approach with both in-person and virtual options.

How can members of the public address Members of Council at these meetings?

The following options are available:

- Attend a meeting to speak to Members of Council regarding an item on the agenda.
- Submit a written communication for review by Members of Council as part of an agenda item. All written communications can be emailed to the Office of the City Clerk at clerks@vaughan.ca.
- Speak via teleconference (through a computer, app or by phone) live during the meeting. Pre-registration is required by completing the online Request to Speak Form or calling Access Vaughan at 905-832-2281 by noon on the day before the meeting. Members of the public must provide a valid email and/or phone number to participate in a meeting electronically.

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Counter service

With City Hall opened to the public, how will the public be served? For example, will my department's front desk be open to the public?

The City is offering a different citizen service experience than before the pandemic. When a visitor comes to City Hall for in-person assistance, they first go to the Welcome Desk staffed with customer service representatives on the main level. Masks are available to public visitors upon request at the Welcome Desk. If the agent is unable to resolve the issue, the resident is directed to the appropriate Service Station set up in the Atrium, where specific in-person support is provided by employees representing specific departments. There are eight different stations set up as part of the Interim Counter Service Solution. All departmental counters, other than those set up on the main floor, will remain closed. The counter service at the JOC will remain closed.

What is the status of the Counter Service Transformation Project?

As approved by Council in October 2021, the Service Vaughan Strategy includes the Counter Service Transformation Initiative. City Hall counters and the Public Works counter at the JOC will not reopen. Work continues on the Counter Service Transformation Initiative, which will be completed this year. Until then, the public will be served with an Interim Counter Service Solution at City Hall.

Online service

What does the reopening mean for online services?

The City's robust online services will continue to be offered and expanded. Residents are encouraged to use them. Right now, visitors to vaughan.ca can apply for a job; register for recreation programs; report missed waste collection; buy bins and tags online; report road maintenance, including potholes; pay parking tickets online; apply for building/engineering permits; report litter/graffiti; request tree pruning and shrub maintenance; request park or splashpad maintenance and so much more.

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Business reintegration at a glance

Phase 1 Effective Nov. 1, 2021	Phase 2 Effective April 19, 2022	New Normal Effective May 2, 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 30 per cent maximum person load at City Hall and JOC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 50 per cent maximum person load at City Hall and JOC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff expected to return to workplace with Hybrid Model and AWA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No public admittance COVID-19 mandatory active entry pre-screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No public admittance COVID-19 mandatory active entry pre-screening for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full public admittance to all facilities COVID-19 mandatory active entry pre-screening for staff, self-screening for members of the public Council Chambers open for Hybrid Model (in-person and online capabilities)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited staffing in workstations Spacing and scheduling requirements Physical distancing practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No limited staff in workstations No spacing Scheduling requirements to optimize use of space No physical distancing requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No limited staff in workstations No spacing Scheduling requirements to optimize use of space No physical distancing requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking required when in common areas or moving about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No masking requirements Masking is voluntary for staff if they choose to wear one Masking is strongly recommended when staff are in close contact, in a confined space or in a crowded area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No masking requirements Masking is voluntary for staff if they choose to wear one Masking is strongly recommended when staff are in close contact, in a confined space or in a crowded area Department Leaders will determine if masks are required based on a risk assessment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning and disinfecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning and disinfecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning and disinfecting