

## Office of the Mayor

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## Burlington COVID-19 Task Force Meeting #24 – November 29, 2021

### Agenda

#### Update from Mayor:

- Vaccine update: Halton now sits above 86% for second doses of all eligible residents and vaccines now approved and in implementation stage for children ages 5-11 as of last Friday. Second appointments will take place at the 8-week mark and should be able to book closer to that timeframe. We are all watching the newly identified Omicron variant originating from Southern Africa and how it will impact vaccinated individuals.
- The City of Burlington has extended our mask bylaw until July but will certainly reevaluate earlier if the situation improves and we can safely do so.
- As we head into December I know there are many philanthropic initiatives like food and toy drives to support those in need in our community that we will cover throughout this meeting and I encourage everyone to help spread the word and I commit to doing so as well through my office and platforms.

#### Presentation from Eric Vandewall and Dr. Selchen, Joseph Brant Hospital (JBH):

- Topic: the JBH Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) Redevelopment and Expansion project.
  - Urgent need for redevelopment and expansion for mental health and addiction supports for a rapidly growing population and antiquated facilities.
  - Seeing 120-140% inpatient and outpatient capacity levels for over a decade.
  - Our hospital currently has the lowest number of beds per 100,000 population in Ontario. 10 beds per 100K vs 19 beds per 100K provincial average. 32 beds are required given our population growth with up to 42 needed by 2033/34.
  - Currently 40% of individuals accessing MHA services at JBH are from across the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant region.
  - Current inpatient rooms are outdated, cramped and do not offer sufficient privacy and dignity.
  - The hospital has submitted a Pre-Capital Submission Form to the Ministry of Health and are looking for funding to make it happen.
  - The first and third levels in the North tower would house the MHA program – it is important to co-locate the programs in the main hospital as opposed to how it is functioning today. They are looking to increase beds from 19 to 32 including 6 psychiatric beds and child and youth inpatient beds and day hospital with acute general beds.
  - Benefits: ability to keep those who need help served here within our community in the best ways possible, decrease wait times and hallway healthcare.
  - JBH Foundation support/campaign will happen pending Board approval. Lots of support in community for this initiative.

- Eric is asking for us to help get the word out about these services (especially during this difficult time of the pandemic) and this initiative/ask.
- Representative Ken Audziss from MPP McKenna's office noted this is a priority for the MPP.
- Further details can be found in the accompanying presentation deck.
- **Roundtable – all other participants (food scarcity, business supports, councillors, etc.):**
  - **Eric Vandewall, Joseph Brant Hospital:**
    - Covid prevalence at Joseph Brant Hospital is low (6 or less over the past few months) mostly ICU patients and in many cases unvaccinated patients.
    - Returned to pre-pandemic levels in terms of surgical work to meet current needs and address backlogs.
    - Staff and physicians are definitely burnt out and they have seen some attrition (seeing 10% + vacancy rates whereas they are normally around 5% or less) – trying to address through innovative staffing models, e.g additional PSW supports and these models are working to ensure appropriate staffing.
    - Very high vaccination rate for staff and some terminations have happened as a result of JBH's mandatory vaccination policy.
    - New variant – Omicron – will take a couple of weeks to better understand it. In meantime, stay the course. Third doses will be available to everyone starting in January so get that done when you're able.
  - **Mabel Watt, Halton Region:**
    - Mask bylaw extended to April 30<sup>th</sup> in Halton
    - Burlington is 86% double vaxxed.
    - Two new pediatric-friendly clinics have opened up for vaccination including one in Burlington
    - Bookings for children ages 5-11 have been very high and as more supply comes in more appointments will become available.
    - Those who are 70+, healthcare workers and essential workers as well as those who got 2 doses of Astra Zeneca are already eligible for a third dose.
  - **Lisa Lunski, Wellington Square United Church / Meal Bag Program**
    - Very pleased to hear about the work at JBH re MHA
    - Continuing food pick up and drop offs and supporting those living transiently (ex: emergency housing situation in motels) and that will continue into the foreseeable future
    - Needs are still very high (130-140 people picking up outside on Fridays) – still not having people inside to eat yet.
    - Christmas Eve will be the pickup date for Christmas dinner (usual Friday) that can be heated up on the 25<sup>th</sup>. They are also doing stockings for kids up to age 19 along with that. (\$30-\$35 value).
    - They're also having a Christmas Store beginning next Friday with toys and other items that people can choose 1-2 toys and smaller items per child and wrapping paper to take home.
  - Robin Bailey, Burlington Food Bank
    - Consistently busy even throughout the summer where they normally see a drop off but this year it remained high need.
  - Humber Report for Feed Ontario will come out tomorrow (provincial overview) so watch for that.

- Working with Open Doors St. Christopher's for their holiday dinner on December 21<sup>st</sup> and they're looking for treats/nuts to have out for that.
- Salvation Army is doing regular programming like gifts as well.
- Local firehalls have drop boxes that will support Salvation Army or Wellington Square.
- **Graham Hill, Food for Life**
- Echoes what Robin and Lisa have said. No decline in need.
- Will do a seniors holiday box with a holiday meal (a chicken, other items that seniors have requested – they found a whole turkey a bit too much)
- Good news coming re: federal funding so watch for that.
- **Lita Barrie, Burlington Public Library**
- Burlington Public Library branches will be operating as the City's Warming Centres this winter.
- **Kris Smith, Burlington Tourism**
- Biggest advocacy piece right now is for our restaurants and the minimum wage increase for alcohol servers, as well as inequity in pay between front-of-house and back-of-house in restaurants. Industry is considering the practice of tipping (and maybe removing it). Looking at AGCO/LCBO licensee rates (re: wholesale costing) as well and how that can be competitive and support local producers.
- Ken Audziss mentioned they are also working with Attorney General's office re: the tax on liquor – anything that can be done to help defray costs for restaurants will be helpful.
- **Terry Caddo, Burlington Chamber of Commerce – new President (welcome!)**
- Chamber has distributed 85,000 rapid (antigen) tests to local businesses and 20,000 just came in. Will be distributing through end of March at this point. Any business in Burlington can make use of this offering (under 150 employees as well as daycares and nursery schools).
- **Andrea Grebenc, HDSB**
- Also glad to see JBH presentation this morning on MHA and happy to see high uptake of vaccine appointments by 5-11 age group. Sense of relief and hope in the educational sector. 91% uptake rate for 12-18 year olds in Burlington so hoping to see that in this age group as well. Very high vaccination rate for staff as well.
- **Jenna from MP Karina Gould's Office**
- Delivery of vaccine doses for pediatric doses have been solid.
- Concern about new variant certainly of note especially for those who have travelled to specific regions of concern. New travel restrictions are in place as a result.
- Federal news release from late last week can be found here: [LINK](#)
- **Ken Audziss, MPP McKenna's office**
- Highlighted the great work being done together when we all reach out to one another in a spirit of collaboration and urgency. Referenced the encampment of individuals in need of housing recently in Burlington and work with JBH for urgent covid testing, then vaccinations, and work through Halton Region to find a shelter available within Halton Region (Oakville) and future plan of support - all within one day.