

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2021

Town Council implements COVID restrictions and awaits further information from the province

Following a Special Meeting of Council held on September 22, 2021, Town Council made the decision to selectively implement a combination of COVID restriction exemption programs at some Town owned facilities. This effectively removes the physical distancing and masking requirements at these facilities.

Town Council has deferred a decision regarding the Omniplex and Park Valley Pool until further information can be obtained from the province. It should be noted that the province's REP program does not impact youth sport programs. Youth and children under the age of 18 will not be expected to provide proof of vaccination, a negative COVID test or proof of medical exemption under these mandates to participate in organized group sports.

"We want to ensure that we have all the information before making this important decision," commented Mayor Michael Doerksen. "We are in a position where we have to make a decision between two unpopular choices. We want to ensure that the decision we make will have the least impact on our residents and families. It is unfortunate that, once again, the province is downloading these difficult decisions onto municipalities to make, causing further friction in the community. One thing we can all agree on is that recreation options, programming and events are paramount to our mental health, our decisions were based on what would allow for the continuation of these important services to our residents."

Administration has reached out to the province for clarification with respect to user groups obtaining their own exemptions. The decision is expected to be made on Wednesday, September 29, 2021, during Council's Governance & Priorities Committee Meeting.

Beginning immediately, the following facilities will adopt the Government of Alberta's Restriction Exemption Program (REP):

Total Works Health and Fitness

Youth (under 18) sport, fitness and performance activities

Indoor group classes, training, and competitions are permitted, but participants are required to:

- screen for symptoms
- maintain 2 metres distancing, except youth while engaged in physical activity
- wear a mask, except youth while engaged in physical activity

Everyone 18 years of age or older will need to provide one of the following:

- Proof of COVID vaccination,
- A recent (within 72 hours) negative COVID test
- Proof of medical exemption

MacKenzie Conference Centre

Everyone over the age of 12 will need to provide one of the following:

- Proof of COVID vaccination,
- A recent (within 72 hours) negative COVID test
- Proof of medical exemption

Implementing an REP at these facilities will allow for adult group programming and classes to continue at Total Works Health and Fitness Centre which are currently not permitted under Alberta Health Services (AHS) capacity and operating guidelines. Further, this will allow important events and functions such as weddings, funerals and upcoming holiday events to proceed at the MacKenzie Conference Centre as they would not be permissible under AHS' current guidelines.

Beginning immediately, the following facilities will adhere to AHS' business capacity and operating restrictions:

Clean Energy Technology Centre (CETC)

The CETC will operate under the following operational conditions and restrictions:

- Capacity limited to 1/3 of fire code capacity
- Attendees must be with household members only, or 2 close contacts
- Adult indoor group classes are suspended
- Indoor one-on-one training and solo activities permitted with 3 metre physical distancing

Due to the nature of the business conducted at the CETC including the education component, programming and courses currently offered at the CETC will not be impacted and can therefore operate comfortably at 1/3 capacity while still accommodating students and patrons.

“These decisions were not made lightly,” commented Mayor Michael Doerksen. “Town Council reviewed and considered many options and understands that this is a divisive topic in the community and not everyone will agree. The Town was faced with the difficult choice, like many other businesses, to operate at 1/3 capacity or implement the Government of Alberta’s Restrictions Exemption Program.”