

Subject: RMWB – Declaration of a State of Local Emergency (SOLE)**APPROVALS:**_____
Director_____
Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

THAT Council receive this report for information.

Summary:

As of Sunday, April 25, the Province of Alberta reported that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) had the highest active COVID-19 case ratio (per 100,000 population) in Alberta at 1,339:1. The RMWB concurrently had the third highest number of total active cases, after Calgary and Edmonton, with 1,086 active cases.

Indigenous leadership within the Region asked that Council respond to these recent significant numbers of active cases, and it did so on April 25, by calling a Special Meeting. Council resolved at that meeting that a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) related to the "pandemic" COVID-19 be declared in response to the recent numbers of active cases. A declaration was signed by Mayor Don Scott, QC on April 26 which will be in effect, barring other circumstances, until Sunday July 25, 2021.

Background:

As recently as March 24, the RMWB re-activated its Face Covering Bylaw, as active cases exceeded the 50 case threshold, meaning the region's number of active COVID-19 cases escalated 2,072% in a single month.

Of the active Fort McMurray cases reported by Alberta Health Services (AHS), 24.05% originated in the Oil Sands through contact tracing.

At a regular Provincial press conference on April 26, Premier Jason Kenney expressed heartfelt concern for the Region. He looked for possible solutions, short of opening vaccinations to any demographic not currently approved elsewhere in Alberta under the current rollout protocols. Among the suggested solutions was to fully utilize approved and available vaccines within groups that seem to be lagging, based on provincial averages (i.e. not letting any day go by with "unused supply"). The Premier asked whether there was "vaccine hesitancy" by residents within the Region.

Without blaming any group, the Premier also suggested that the increased numbers of COVID-19 active cases may be as a result of some or all of the following:

- work site gatherings that are not compliant with Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) rules (household gatherings only);
- a surge of current work site numbers associated with "turnarounds";
- complexity with the mobility of the oil sands production workforce;
- day care or other childcare related transmission; and
- outdoor patio gatherings that are not compliant with CMOH rules (household groups only).

More specifically, the following guidelines from the CMOH continue to apply with respect to gatherings (CMOH Order 12-2021; April 19, 2021):

- Retail services (including shopping malls) reduced customer capacity (15 per cent of code).
- One-to-One training only for indoor fitness activities.
- No adult performance activities (music, drama, etc.).
- Indoor in-person service is no longer permitted at restaurants, pubs, bars, lounges, cafés and food courts.
- Outdoor patio dining, takeout, curbside pickup, and delivery services are allowed.
- Places of worship continue to be limited (15 per cent of code).

The application of the CMOH rules includes the continued practices:

- Only "Households" may gather:
 - a person who resides in a private residence must not permit a person who does not normally reside in that residence to enter or remain in the residence; and
 - a person residing on their own may have two other persons in their "cohort".
- Prohibited:
 - private gatherings at an indoor public place; and
 - private social gathering at an outdoor private place or public place (11 or more).
- Recommended practices:
 - maintain minimum physical distance of 2 metres (unless in same household);
 - weddings limited to a maximum of 10 persons; and
 - funerals limited to a maximum of 20 persons.
- Restaurants:
 - outdoor patios with a roof must not have more than one enclosing wall;
 - outdoor patios without a roof may have one or more enclosing walls; and
 - a fence or half-wall is not an enclosing wall.

To stem the continued increase of active cases, it is critical that guidelines from the Chief Medical Officer of Health are followed. In their simplest form, the rules remain the same over the last year: no indoor social gatherings; keep 2 metres apart from others; wear a mask in public; wash your hands; and, stay home when sick.

Suggested Actions:

The following actions by the RMWB could be taken to help reduce the accelerated rate of active cases in the Region and to re-engage the community in the battle against this pandemic:

- Continue to amplify Government of Alberta public health messaging.
- Implementation of a Communications Plan to actively produce and share COVID-19 public health messaging to educate and increase awareness of the current situation in an effort to stop the spread of the virus and help keep the community safe.
- Continue to work with Indigenous and rural communities to increase awareness and education on access to mobile vaccination teams, social distancing requirements, and other best practices for limiting the spread of COVID-19.
- Support and share community grassroots Covid awareness campaign promoting actions to protect residents, our local healthcare and economy.
- Work with community and industry partners to advocate for measures such as:
 - Assistance in testing, more aggressive onsite vaccination, and alternatives to movement to/from site including staying in camps.
 - Engage local school boards regarding the continuation of online learning in all schools including public and private in the RMWB.
 - A vaccination program for age groups between 20-59 and providing “pop-up” clinics in Fort McMurray.
 - In rural communities, examine the opportunity to provide community vaccination centres.
 - Increase operating hours of the Rapid Flow Through Clinic at MacDonald Island to serve shift workers seven days a week.
- Engage with the Canadian Red Cross to provide logistical and human resource support to AHS to amplify vaccination programs in Fort McMurray and rural communities.
- Continue to press the Provincial government that the unique characteristics of the Region (demographics, isolation, dynamic population, etc.) warrant a targeted approach to vaccination.

Budget/Financial Implications:

Additional resources may be required to actively promote smart and responsive health practices in the Region.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Successful and ongoing re-enforcement of Provincial measures may substantially reduce the rate at which COVID-19 continues to spread in the Region.

While the RMWB has the authority and capacity to enforce its Face Masking Bylaw and the CMOH Orders, enforcement is not the preferred nor the most successful strategy in securing community support to reduce the acceleration in the spread of the virus.

Strategic Priorities:

- Responsible Government

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: April 26, 2021 – Declaration of SOLE



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

Declaration of a State of Local Emergency

Emergency Management Act, RSA 2000, c. E-6.8

WHEREAS section 21 of the *Emergency Management Act* (the Act) empowers a local authority to declare a State of Local Emergency (SOLE);

AND WHEREAS an emergency exists in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) due to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic;

AND WHEREAS the risks to public health and safety constituting the Pandemic emergency continue to exist within specified areas in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (and variants);

AND WHEREAS once a State of Local Emergency has been declared, pursuant to section 24 of the Act a local authority may do ***all acts and take all necessary proceedings***, including the powers found within section 19 of the Act;

AND WHEREAS these risks to public health and safety constitute an emergency within the meaning of the Act insofar as they demand special regulation of persons or property to protect the safety, health or welfare of people and to limit damage to property, including control of access throughout the portions of the RMWB that continue to pose risks to public health and safety;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to the *Emergency Management Bylaw 18/006*, this State of Local Emergency (SOLE) may be authorized by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Acting Mayor, or the Chief Administrative Officer, if the preceding individual in the enumerated list is unavailable to make the declaration;

AND WHEREAS RMWB municipal Council met on Sunday April 26, 2021 and, duly constituted, by resolution approved the declaration of a State of Local Emergency ("SOLE") subject to completion of this written Declaration;

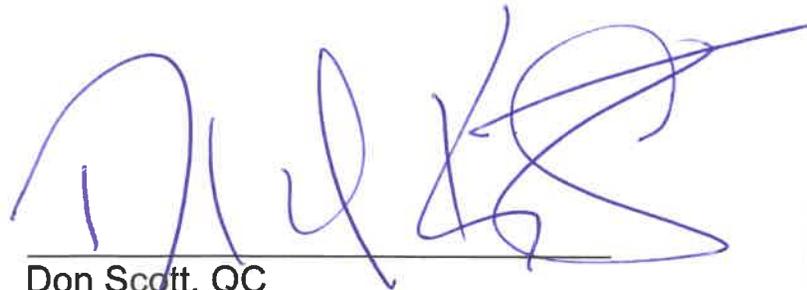
NOW THEREFORE the Mayor of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (or the appropriate successor to whom the power to declare a state of local emergency is delegated under *Emergency Management Bylaw 18/006*) **HEREBY DECLARES THAT:**

A State of Local Emergency (SOLE) within the entirety of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has been enacted pursuant to the *Emergency Management Act*.

The SOLE will, pursuant to section 22(4) of the Act, lapse at the end of 90 days from the date of this declaration (i.e. at the end of Sunday July 25, 2021), subject to:

1. earlier cancellation by the Minister of Municipal Affairs;
2. earlier termination by the RMWB Council; or
3. renewal by the RMWB Council.

This Declaration is made at Fort McMurray in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo on the 26th day of April, 2021 and will come into effect at 3:00 P.M. on this day, Monday April 26th, 2021.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Don Scott', written over a horizontal line.

Don Scott, QC

Mayor

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo