

City of Burlington - Sept. 23, 2020 Telephone Town Hall on COVID-19 Response and Support

Eric, Moderator (00:00:00):

Hello everyone, and welcome to the city of Burlington's fall telephone town hall meeting. We are live this evening with your mayor, Marianne Meed Ward. In addition, we are joined by thousands of residents from across the city, listening in. To ask a question live today, simply press three on your phone's keypad. Once again, press three to ask a live question at any time. My name is Eric, and I'll be the moderator for the town hall today. During this live telephone town hall, we encourage you to get involved and to ask questions. The mayor, council, and the city of Burlington leadership team, chose this format as this is an interactive town hall with you, which means they, and tonight's panelists, all want to hear from you. They have made it a priority to engage and connect with you and fellow residents to update you on how the city of Burlington is moving forward in the fall, as we continue to provide critical services and resources for residents during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Eric, Moderator (00:00:56):

Our intention is to get as many questions as possible from you tonight. You can ask a live question at any time by pressing three on your phone's keypad. Someone will take your name and place you in the question queue. Now, again, we're still having new people join us, and I want to welcome you to the city of Burlington's fall telephone town hall meeting. We are live this evening with your mayor, Marianne Meed Ward. In addition, we are joined by thousands of residents from across the city, listening in. We want to remind everyone joining us, you can ask a live question at any time by pressing three on your phone's keypad. At this time, I'm going to introduce Mayor Meed Ward so she can open up the town hall. Mayor Meed Ward, please go ahead.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:01:35):

Thank you so much, and thank you to everyone tuning in. We really appreciate you giving us your time for the fifth town hall since this pandemic started. And much has changed in the last few weeks, we are going to have a lot to talk about, and you know, our children have gone back to schools and university, businesses have reopened as we've entered stage three, many people have returned to work. Restaurants and gyms are open and we hear new information almost daily from health officials in different levels of government.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:02:07):

While Burlington's numbers do continue to remain low, at last count, we were at 11 active cases, that's not the picture across Ontario and I know that's a concern to our residents. We know this crisis is far from over and it is clear that we can't let our guard down. We have to remain vigilant and continue with physical distancing, mask wearing, hand-washing, and of course, staying home if we are sick. Tonight, we are going to continue to focus on how we can work together for the next phase of dealing with this pandemic and ensuring that Burlington's numbers stay low. And I do want to thank every member of our community for all the efforts you have taken. It is your willingness to make sacrifices. It is been a tough time to keep yourself and your family and your neighbors safe that have kept us low while communities around us have seen their numbers increase.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:02:59):

So we're going to get right to the questions. We have a great panel, as always, tuning in and here they are. Stuart Miller, director of education for the Halton District School Board, and Pat Daly, director of education for the Halton Catholic District School Board. If you have school questions, I'm sure we'll get some of those. Eric Vandewall joins us once again, president and CEO of Joseph Brant hospital, along with our city manager, Tim Commisso, Mary Battaglia, our director of roads, parks, and forestry, and Denise Beard, our manager of community development and recreation services here at the city.

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Marianne Meed Ward (00:03:34):

Also joining us on the panel tonight is ward three counselor, Rory Nisan, if you have questions to send his way. And I know most of the rest of city council is listening in on the line to what you have to say. So I will direct questions to people as appropriate and I really do want to thank our panel for joining us once again and giving your time to our community to answer questions. So let's get right to it. I know there's a lot of questions and I'm going to turn things back to our facilitators so we can take the first call.

Eric, Moderator (00:04:06):

Thank you, mayor. We do have our first live question coming up first. We are actually going to do a survey question. You can use your touch-tone phone to indicate your response on this question. We do want to hear from you. How comfortable are you with taking part in virtual or online public meetings? If you are very comfortable, press one. If you are somewhat comfortable, press two. And if you are not at all comfortable, press three. So again, how comfortable are you with taking part in virtual and online public meetings? If you are very comfortable, press one. If you are somewhat comfortable, press two. If you are not at all comfortable press three. We have our first live question joining us now, it is Brad. Brad, you're live on the line. Please, go ahead.

Brad (00:04:50):

Hi Marianne, how are you doing?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:04:53):

Great. Great to have you with us Brad. [crosstalk 00:04:55] What's on your mind?

Brad (00:04:57):

One question. Okay, with a second wave coming up, what are your backups and what are your plans to keep everything on the go?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:05:06):

That is a great question. So we are going to, we do have continuity of business operations. I know it is a fancy word for basically saying we are going to keep services running for our community throughout this pandemic, as we've done really since it started in March. I'm going to ask our city manager, Tim Commisso and Mary Battaglia may want to weigh in there, as well as Denise Beard around the services, the plans that we have to make sure that we can continue to deliver services through a potential second wave. And if we have infections that we have to deal with. Go ahead, Tim.

Tim Commisso (00:05:43):

Thank You. [inaudible 00:05:44] I'm actually going to refer it to Mary and Denise in part because their departments provide the vast majority of frontline services.

Tim Commisso (00:05:53):

So I think what we're really looking at is how do we continue to provide services and the plans that they have for contingency, things like that. So, Mary.

Mary Battaglia (00:06:06):

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Thanks, Tim. So I will start and talk about the services that are provided through our department, which is road and sidewalk maintenance, forestry, park maintenance, cemetery services, and fleet. So our contingency plans will look to ensure that we prioritize what work is the most important. So for example, we know residents greatly appreciate the fall leaf cleanup, and we will be doing our best to ensure that we get around to every single residence to pick up the leaves and also to make sure that we are prepared for winter operations. And that is a legislative component of the work that we do, and we do have timelines that we have to meet. We will be ensuring we train some extra staff on equipment so that if we do end up dropping in numbers, we will have staff that can be replaced. And I'll turn it over to Denise to provide some comments.

Denise Beard (00:07:08):

Great, thanks Mary. To answer the question, Brad, we also, in recreation service, evaluate what is more essential than other services. And so we also will triage what kind of services we will provide to the community as we may enter a second wave or not. We also comply always with the provincial orders that are in place and people, one thing that has come out loud and clear through the pandemic, is people want to be active and engaged and out in the community. And so we take, we really want to welcome people, but we want to make sure that we're doing it in a safe, respectful way, that is in accordance with the provincial orders to keep our staff safe, to keep our residents safe, yet keep everybody active and engaged. So we also will triage our services as, if things changed through the province. [crosstalk 00:08:01]

Tim Commisso (00:08:01):

I could just add on, thank you.

Denise Beard (00:08:02):

Go ahead, Tim.

Tim Commisso (00:08:03):

Thank you Denise and Mary. We also, we have legislative services that we have to maintain service standards. So in some areas, like in our winter control and that, but the other thing we are, we have done, is really, report out to council monthly. So what we do is we really keep council informed and we also bring decisions to them. So in some cases we need to spend more money because there's precautions we have to take. So we are closely watching sort of what we're doing for the fall. And I would imagine starting in October, if there's any issues around service delivery we will certainly bring that to council's attention and get direction. Thank you.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:08:44):

And just to add to that, the services that we deliver have already been redesigned. It is not the same old service that people are used to. We have put in place health and safety precautions in all of the services that we provide, especially the ones that are public facing, and most of our staff continue to do their work from home.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:09:04):

We have limited hours at city hall and if you've been to city hall, you know the precautions that we've taken there with limited access, one-way directional signage on the floor, caustic barriers, and that's just one service. Every single one of the services that we deliver for the public have been redesigned with health and safety in mind. So we are already able to continue. If there's a second wave, we continue to deliver those services in a safe manner. So there should not be an interruption in service overall. And, but we're going to watch that. We're

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not taking anything for granted. And, as I said at the top, we are not out of the woods yet on this, and we have to remain vigilant. Back to you, moderator, for our next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:09:50):

We do have another live question, but quickly, I just want to remind everyone that we are taking live questions. If you would like to press three on your phone's keypad, someone will take your name and place you in the question queue so you have a chance to ask a live question on the town hall tonight. We are going to go to our next live question. Lorna, who is joining us live on the line now. Lorna, welcome.

Lorna (00:10:11):

Hi. Hi, ma'am.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:10:14):

Hey, Lorna. Thank you for joining [crosstalk 00:10:16] us.

Lorna (00:10:16):

Hi. I was just phoning to ask that my granddaughter, who has her seven year old son in school, was called to take him home because he was hot. And don't they, aren't they supposed to have one of those thermometers to check whether the kids are hot from fever or hot from running around?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:10:45):

Thank you so much for that question, and I'm going to give both Stuart Miller and Pat Daly, our directors of education respectively for the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board, to talk about the policies and protocols around a potential illness. I'll turn it to you first Stuart. Go ahead.

Stuart Miller (00:11:03):

Thanks Mayor Meed Ward, and hi Lorna. Thanks for the question. I, the principals would not take the temperature of the student. If the student was warm, but I would imagine that the student, your granddaughter, was also experiencing some other symptoms, and in that case, the principals are required to phone home and let the parents know and advise the parents that they should pick their daughter up. That actually, it is a little heightened in COVID, but that would be the normal case in a normal school year if a student was feeling unwell to pick them up. We would not be taking the temperature. And I suspect that it is likely that the student was probably experiencing some other issues as well, other symptoms I should say. So, pass it to Pat.

Pat Daly (00:11:54):

Thanks, Stuart. Yeah, we would be following the same process as well. Both of our boards are working closely with public health and have worked closely with them and the province as well to establish the protocols that we have to follow at the school level. Thank you.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:12:11):

Thanks very much. Moderator, next question please.

Eric, Moderator (00:12:17):

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Our next live question is going to be coming up from Moselle. Who's joining us live now. Moselle, welcome. Please go ahead.

Moselle (00:12:26):

Good evening, everybody. Thank you for taking our calls. My question is, when can we expect a different form of testing, as opposed to the stick up the nose into your eye? I've heard some horror stories, so I'm scared.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:12:46):

Thank you so much for that question. I am going to turn it over to Eric Vandewall, our president and CEO of Joseph Brant hospital, and Eric, maybe you can also touch on how and where the testing is done. We have some good news to share with the community, but in terms of alternative testing methods, go ahead.

Eric Vandewall (00:13:06):

Thanks very much Mayor Meed Ward, and thank you Moselle for the question. So, very timely in fact, today, the premier announced that there will be testing done in private pharmacies, but if a particular note, this testing would be saliva based versus nasal pharyngeal. So nasal pharyngeal is where you have the swab that is placed deep up into your nose, and that's the standard test right now, but I think that technology has evolved so that we will now see saliva based testing in the private pharmacies. And we will likely see that then move into assessment centers. Maybe not so much assessment centers, but certainly move into community clinics that are set up currently for testing.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:13:53):

Thanks very much for that. And I also wanted to turn it over to a counselor Nisan who actually has some recent personal experience with the test. Go ahead, counsellor.

Rory Nisen (00:14:02):

Thank you, Mary. Rory Nisan here, Ward 3. I had the test done a few weeks ago. I had a bit of a sore throat, a couple other mild symptoms and better safe than sorry. So I went in, had the [inaudible 00:14:15]. Yeah, it is not the most fun I've had in an afternoon, but I can assure you that it is uncomfortable for about 10 seconds and then it is all over, and there were no lasting effects for me anyway. So I just want to encourage people not to be afraid because it is very doable. Thank you.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:14:35):

Thanks very much for that. Moderator, next question please.

Eric, Moderator (00:14:39):

We have another live question coming up. Again, a quick reminder, if you have a live question you would like to ask, press three on your phone's keypad. We are now going to go to Rupa, who is joining us live. Rupa, welcome, please go ahead.

Rupa (00:14:53):

Good evening, everybody. I just wanted some information. I saw on the internet that Toronto, there will be lots of pharmacies that as a Friday, will be having the COVID test. I know part of my question has been already

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answered. Now, is Burlington going to have that as well? And the other part is, are the pharmacists going to be carrying out this test, or the pharmacy technicians, and how experienced are they if it is going to be the nasal test? Second, the other part of my question is, how good would the saliva test be? How positive answers could we get, and how soon would those answers come?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:15:38):

That was a triple parter there. Thank you so much for that, Rupa. So the, yes, we all just got the announcement recently. We are still digesting where all of that will be. There is no pharmacy yet in Burlington, but I'm going to turn it back to Eric to speak to the, just how the swab is done and typically how pharmacists deal with that and their experience level to do that test. Go ahead Eric.

Eric Vandewall (00:16:08):

Thanks very much, Mary Meed Ward. Rupa, yes, very timely question. So we are still working through the details to understand how the actual process will work in the private pharmacies. However, in so far as a nasal pharyngeal swab versus a saliva based test, a nasal pharyngeal is probably highest reliability, and the reason why the swab has put up your nose fairly deep is because that's where the highest level of virus burden is, and so that provides the best sample, so to speak, for testing. Similarly, saliva based is still very reliable. It doesn't have the same level of viral load as is in the nasal pharyngeal process, but still reliable for the purposes of certainly asymptomatic testing. I think for nasal pharyngeal testing, we would certainly want to see that done for people with who are symptomatic with the COVID-19 symptoms.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:17:05):

Thank you, and that is a really important distinction to make. The pharmacies are really intended for the asymptomatic folks. And if you are symptomatic, they're still asking you to go to an assessment center like Joseph Brant hospital. Is that correct, Eric?

Eric Vandewall (00:17:23):

Yes, absolutely. A very important distinction. So if you have, if you are experiencing symptoms, then you should come to the assessment center as to Joseph Brant hospital or one of the other centers in Halton region that are attached to Oakville Trafalgar, Halton healthcare, hospitals. The testing there is nasal pharyngeal and is also, a physician is present to actually conduct an assessment as well, based on your symptoms. So very different than asymptomatic. You're simply getting a swab on an asymptomatic test and then your results are provided to you afterwards a few days later.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:17:57):

Thanks very much for that and great questions. All of them. Moderator, we are ready for the next one.

Eric, Moderator (00:18:04):

We have our next live question coming up now from Tanya. Tanya, welcome. Please go ahead. Hi, Tanya. You are joining us live on the line. Please go ahead with your question. Tanya, are you there?

Tanya (00:18:22):

Yes, Tanya.

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Marianne Meed Ward (00:18:23):

Go ahead. We can hear [crosstalk 00:18:24] you.

Eric, Moderator (00:18:24):

Oh, yes.

Tanya (00:18:25):

Hi. Thank you very much for taking my call. My question is, that with Halton transportation and getting our students to school, my daughter who is in eighth grade, was seated with two other eighth graders. So there were three eighth graders in a seat and there were other seats that could have been used on the bus.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:18:54):

So you are wondering [crosstalk 00:18:56] why that happened?

Tanya (00:18:56):

I'm just wondering what happened with the planning of this?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:18:58):

Thank you so much for that question, and I will give both Stuart and Pat, maybe we'll go to you first Pat, a chance to speak to that as the Halton transportation services are shared by both school boards. Go ahead, Pat.

Pat Daly (00:19:13):

Thanks mayor. And thanks for the, the question Tanya. Our schools did develop seating plans for transportation and shared them with Halton transportation services. There's certainly no reason why three students should be on one seat, especially if there are other seats available. I would suggest that you reach out specifically to your son or daughter's school to relay that message and they'll be able to get in touch with Halton transportation services for you.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:19:49):

Thanks for that, Pat. Anything you'd like to add Stuart?

Stuart Miller (00:19:53):

Not really mayor. Pat said it all. Tanya, it was something that surprised me when you said that there were three students to a seat because there are seating plans for the buses. So yeah, I think reach back to the school.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:20:10):

Okay. Thank you for that. A good question and moderator, we are ready for our next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:20:16):

Up next. We have another live question. A quick reminder, press three on your phone's keypad if you would like to ask a live question. Joining us now is Mary. Mary, welcome. Please go ahead.

Mary (00:20:30):

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Hello?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:20:31):

Hey, Mary. We can hear you. Go ahead.

Mary (00:20:33):

Oh, I didn't know if I was the only Mary. I had [inaudible 00:20:36]. My question has been partially answered. I'm seeing these horrid line ups at testing stations, and I'm wondering if you are considering adding another testing station, but apparently the pharmacies will be that answer. My second comment is, I'm wondering if the results are getting back to people as promptly as they could be. My husband was tested towards the end of July. From the time I called to test, until he was actually tested was one week. It took us three weeks to get the results, which is useless if you are planning on visiting a senior or whatever. I understand they were saying that the testing was done in Hamilton, all the testing was done, and for us it was useless at the [crosstalk 00:21:30] end.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:21:31):

Mary. Thank you for that, Mary. And we're very sorry to hear you. We, I certainly in my office have received lots of questions about testing and timelines, and so it is very relevant. I'm sure folks on this call are looking for some insights into that. So again, I'm going to turn this over to you, Eric, to talk about the increase in testing and how quickly people can expect to get results and perhaps for the benefit of the group, who does those testing and how it is all linked together.

Eric Vandewall (00:22:05):

Certainly happy to Mayor Meed Ward. Mary, thanks for your question. And first maybe I'll give a bit of background. There has been really a significant sharp increase in the demand for testing, and this is right across the province. And this is largely due to all the things associated with the stage three reopening. So as people return to their routines and activities, including kids going back to school, teachers back in school, people going back to work, recreational activities have been opened up, such as hockey and basketball, and many of these activities require a negative test to participate in this study. So for example, if a child shows up for ice hockey and has symptoms, they are not able to join the group and they have to be cleared of their symptoms and their condition medically before they can rejoin. I think also based on the significant increase we've seen in the number of new cases per day across the province that has also created some, I think heightened awareness...

Eric Vandewall (00:23:03):

Getting across the province, that has also created some, I think, heightened awareness and perhaps some anxiety with folks wanting to get tested, or maybe a feeling that they may have been exposed to somebody who had been a COVID-19 positive. So all of that to say there is unprecedented demand across the province for testing. Now, so what does that mean in Burlington? In Burlington, we have an assessment center at the hospital, which I mentioned is specific for symptomatic testing, and we've already increased our capacity at the hospital for symptomatic testing from 50 to 70 tests per day. The second thing we've done at the hospital is we've created a drive-through. And so the drivethrough... we've increased the testing capacity for the drive-through for up to 400 tests per day. And that is really more for the asymptomatic individual who's looking for a test or needing to test to clear into a long-term care home.

Eric Vandewall (00:23:52):

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So right now the wait times in Burlington typically are three to four days, either for the assessment center or the drive-through, to book a test. And then in the case of the assessment center, you would actually have your appointment one to two days after that. In the drive-through case you would probably have... it's likely you could actually have the test same or next day once the appointment booking of three to four days has occurred. And then following that, the results now going to the laboratories, that has also seen significant demand as well. These lab technicians have been working across the province 24/7 for seven months, and nobody anticipated this demand that we're seeing for testing.

Eric Vandewall (00:24:33):

So I know that testing, as of a week ago, approximately 80% of all tests were being done approximately in 24 hour turnaround for the results. Now it is typically three to four days. It could be high as four to five days in the Burlington/Hamilton area. And that's all because of the demand. So finally, I'd like to say so while we have expanded testing at Joseph Brant Hospital, both drive-through and assessment center, we're also looking to establish a community-based testing center at Nelson Arena. And so this center will be hopefully opening up in the days ahead, we're looking to next week, and that location will be able as primarily for asymptomatic testing. So if you don't have symptoms, please come to the Nelson site. And there we are going to be able to ramp up to another 400 tests per day. So we're going to try and double our capacity in the next week or so to meet this unprecedented demand. So I hope that answers your question, Mary, and again, I'm sorry for the delays you experienced.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:25:37):

Thank you very much for that; I think it was quite comprehensive, Eric. Are there differences among regions? I do occasionally hear that, and what would explain that, if anything?

Eric Vandewall (00:25:51):

Yes, there are differences in regions. I'm hearing on average it's anywhere between six to seven days just to book and actually get the test and then, as I mentioned, it can take four to five days to get the results. I think part of it is also the prevalence in the region. So we know there are a couple of areas that are kind of hotter zones in the province. So, Toronto, Peel, and Ottawa for example, have had the highest number of new cases consistently over the past week. And so I expect that people living in those areas may feel they've had a higher risk of exposure, want to have some self-assurance, and again based on prevalence, I think that's also increasing demand.

Eric Vandewall (00:26:27):

I think the other pieces of the different variation in models. So some of the models we're seeing for testing include people being able to line up. That's not a model that we're using in Burlington. And the reason for that is several fold. First, people are lining up six to seven hours and it's really not a very good patient experience to line up indefinitely. Secondly, the principles of physical distancing, I think, are being compromised quite frequently, especially when people are in the lineup. They start speaking with one another and forget yourself as to where you are in the line. And the next thing you know, you're within proximity of one another. And thirdly, just from the perspective of effective booking and appointment time and efficiency, that's why we're in an appointment based system and that has worked well so that we don't see, for example, the grounds of the hospital with lineups of cars waiting to get into the drive-through, for example. So a variety of models, but pretty much the wait times are consistent right across the province because of the significant demand.

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Marianne Meed Ward (00:27:26):

Thank you so much for that, Eric. And we're ready for our next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:27:31):

We have another live question coming up, but quickly, we're going to do another survey. For everyone joining us, you can use your touch tone phone to indicate your response. We want to know: Once the city of Burlington resumed in-person meetings, how likely are you to attend in-person public meetings? If it is very likely, press one. If it is somewhat likely, press two. If it is not at all likely, press three. So again, once the city of Burlington resumes in-person meetings, how likely are you to attend in-person public meetings? If it is very likely, press one. If it is somewhat likely, press two. If it is not at all likely, press three. We have our next live question it's Susan who's joining us now. Susan, welcome, please go ahead.

Susan (00:28:16):

Hello, Mayor and Council. My question is: I'm wondering if... are indoor pools like, Angela Coughlan and Tansley Woods, and our outdoor and indoor skating rinks are going to be open during the fall and winter? I think that we had a pretty good response with pools in the summertime, and I think it will be great for all ages if we could open those facilities up. I don't know if that's a provincial mandate or a local one. So if I'm wrong, I apologize.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:28:57):

You are right. It's a great question and I know our Manager of Community Development and Recreation Services at the city here, Denise Beard, will want to jump in. And we, I know she'll say this, but we very much agree with you that it's important to provide opportunities for people to get out and get active. And we have done that and we're going to continue to do that and Denise will walk you through what we're doing. Go ahead, Denise.

Denise Beard (00:29:22):

Great, thanks Mayor, and thanks Susan for your question. Yes, the pools are actually open and I'm so thrilled to let the community know that Angela Coughlan Pool just reopened on Monday. It had been closed for an extended period of time for renovations and we just opened it on Monday. So feel free to book your time at the pool as you did this summer. We're asking you to pre-book your swim or aqua fitness class or your lap swim, but they are open and you can definitely join in any of those activities. Tansley Woods we hope to open shortly after Thanksgiving. And starting again with some recreational swimming, some aqua fitness, and we're starting a very small numbered amount of swimming lessons as well.

Denise Beard (00:30:11):

And I can also let you know that the arenas are all opening up, excluding two. And Eric Vandewall mentioned the one, which is Nelson Arena, which we are going to keep available for the hospital to use for some needed testing in the community, which is outstanding. And Skyway Arena is also closed for renovation. So everywhere else we're wide open. We have people getting out, getting active, which is great, and they're adhering to the requirements from the province. And we're just thrilled to see people out and active again.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:30:45):

Absolutely, and just for folks who may have just joined again, to reiterate: our services are continuing and they look very different. They're redesigned. For example, as Denise mentioned, you need to book your time in

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the pool and they look different. We've got a lot of safety precautions in place as you would expect us to. And you know our goal, number one, throughout the pandemic has been keeping you safe, keeping our staff safe, and we've done really well here in Burlington while continuing to offer those services. So it will look different, but you'll have an opportunity to get out and play, which is what we like to see in our community. Over to you, moderator, for the next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:31:26):

We have another live question. Again, a quick reminder to press three on your phone's keypad if you'd like to ask a live question. We have Karen joining us on the line now. Karen, welcome.

Karen (00:31:39):

Hello there, Mayor. My name is Karen and I thank you for taking my inquiry tonight.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:31:44):

Great to have you.

Karen (00:31:46):

My question has to do with Ontario Burlington Library. Considering that our schools, both Halton Public and Catholic are open at full capacity, our libraries, Brant Hills, and Tansley, remain with one hour quotas for visits. And my question has to do with students who are doing online schooling. Most students' courses are longer than one hour and I really don't understand why we're not opening our libraries for students' learning? Especially considering that most students bring their own tablets or computers and their own head phones. I think the students would go to libraries for use of their studies. Perhaps that might be a better place for them to study as opposed to in their homes by themselves or sitting in a Starbucks. And I'd like to hear your comments.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:32:52):

For sure, thank you so much for that question, and I'll take a stab at that. We do have our... the libraries are open. Most of them are open from 10:00 to 7:00, Monday to Friday and Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 to 5:00 and 12:00 to 5:00 on Sundays Central. As you mentioned, in Tansley Woods have a holds pick-up and if you want to book a computer that is by appointment only. So I know it's been a gradual reopening with the libraries and as they try to ramp up and make sure that there's appropriate protocols in place. And certainly there's a lot of online opportunities for people through the library. There's a lot of digital services available. So you don't actually have to come in to the library to do a lot of that support through the library services. So I'll look to see if anyone else on the call, maybe Tim or Denise, have anything to add to that. Otherwise we'll take our next call.

Tim (00:33:56):

I think you've covered it very well, Mayor Meed Ward.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:34:00):

Okay. All right, thanks very much. I guess we will go to our next call then, moderator, please.

Eric, Moderator (00:34:07):

We do have another live call coming up now. It's going to be Renee who's joining us. Renee, welcome, please go

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ahead.

Renee (00:34:13):

All right. Even before COVID happened, Burlington and surrounding cities were not providing enough help for people suffering from mental health disorders, especially post-traumatic stress disorder. Because agencies were refusing long-term counseling saying openly that they make more money from short-term clients than from long-term clients. Is anything being done so that there will be more counseling and more support groups? People heal a lot faster from personal help than from medication.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:34:46):

Oh, I couldn't agree with you more. Thank you so much, Renee. And we do recognize at the city, and I know at the school board, and the hospital, just how critical mental health is and how much it's been negatively impacted throughout this pandemic.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:35:03):

People are social beings and we've experienced significant challenges being able to get together. We do have some resources on the City of Burlington web page that will tell you exactly where you can access mental health services, for free in some cases, online services. So if you go to burlington.ca you will find a link to our COVID page and all the information is there. And we'd be happy, if you don't have a computer or you need some help navigating that, please give a call to our Service Burlington desk at City Hall, and they'd be happy to walk you through and make sure that you know what's available. There's a lot more... When we compiled the list I realized there's a lot more resources available, but it doesn't help if people don't know how to get the service that they need.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:35:54):

I'm also going to turn this over to our a member of parliament, Karina Gould, who's with us tonight, who has some thoughts to share about this? Go ahead, Karina.

Karina (00:36:04):

Thank you so much, Marianne and Renee, thank you for your really important question. I just wanted to do a little bit of a plug for a new service that the federal government has put out. It's a web platform, WellnessTogether.ca and it's free, it's available 24/7, and it is specifically designed to address some of the challenges that you raised. Recognizing how important mental health is, particularly during this pandemic, but even before, as you mentioned, there was a real lack of services and making sure that everyone who needs mental health supports has access to it. So WellnessTogether.ca, you can go online, it's a free service, it's available 24/7. There's an assessment and you'll have someone call you back and be there. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to call my office 905-639-5757. So thank you very much for the question and I couldn't agree with you more. It's something that's very important, which is why the federal government has put this platform together.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:37:11):

Thank you so much for sharing that. And just the phone number for city general information as well, 905-335-7777. Over to you, moderator, for our next question.

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Eric, Moderator (00:37:27):

Up next we have Heidi joining us. Heidi, welcome to the town hall. You're joining us live on the line.

Heidi (00:37:33):

Thank you. Thank you, everyone for your participation. I have a question: With Thanksgiving coming up, we have been invited to our daughter and her husband's home, of course for Thanksgiving dinner, as we always have, but they have a different situation because they have 10 children, aged 3 to 17. And we've been invited for dinner and of course their family already exceeds the 10; with their parents they've got 12 in the family. And they have been our only social bubble basically for the summer. We've taken grandchildren out here and they're at two at a time and we'd love to see them for Thanksgiving and be together, but what's going to be the answer there?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:38:17):

Well, I'm afraid that the answer isn't going to be a very comforting one. We do get this question a lot and the provincial regulations are 10 in total, and that includes family members. So no additional folks above and beyond the 10 for any indoor gatherings. If your own family exceeds 10, of course you're not breaking the rules, but you simply can't add any more. So that is what we have been advised is the regulation at this time. What we've seen is the community spread and the spikes have been because of those private in-home, in-backyard gatherings. And so it's really important to be extra cautious and I know that's not going to be great news for folks as we head into Thanksgiving. So, Eric, I don't know if you have anything further that you want to add to that?

Eric Vandewall (00:39:15):

Thanks, Mayor Meed Ward. Heidi, I'm sorry to say I would have to agree, any gatherings over 10 are not being permitted by the province. I think too, if I just look systemically across our past history with COVID-19, when we've seen events like Mother's Day, for example, or events that typically see large gatherings coming together, increased numbers, we've also then seen two to three weeks later a significant spike in the number of COVID positive cases. So I don't expect, unless we see some very significant change in either behavior and/or measures from the province, I expect we will see a similar type result after Thanksgiving this year. So I'd really encourage you, as difficult as it may be, not to have a gathering that's more than 10. Perhaps be creative and have two gatherings of six at two different locations.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:40:08):

There are some suggestions. I did have a question from a resident who said because it's 25 outside, if you can maintain a six feet difference. And so they apparently have a large backyard and were going to invest in some space heaters. So it's 10 inside, 25 outside, but you do have to make sure that you maintain six feet from anyone who isn't in your social bubble. So there's restrictions there really to keep us safe and to keep those numbers coming down and the spike has really been about those private gatherings. So we really need to be extra careful. All right, moderator, we are ready for our next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:40:45):

Up next we have a question from Lisa. Lisa, welcome, you're joining us live, please go ahead.

Lisa (00:40:55):

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Thank you very much. And thank you everybody, first of all, for all you're doing. My question is... Actually I have two clarifications. One is for Dr. Vandewall: Can you just clarify if the testing center that you're going to be opening at Nelson Arena, will it be the nasal swab or will it be the saliva swab? And the only other question is: Can someone clarify the hours for Centennial Pool?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:41:18):

For sure. So Eric, over to you first about the testing, and then I'll ask Denise to clarify the hours. Go ahead, Eric.

Eric Vandewall (00:41:26):

Thanks, Mayor Meed Ward. First, Lisa, thank you for the bestowing the title of doctor to me. I'm not a physician, however, I've had a lot of experience in this business. But so to answer your question specific to Nelson Arena, it will be pharyngeal testing at this point. As further guidance comes from the province and Public Health on other forms of testing, we will certainly try to make that available to improve the patient experience.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:41:53):

Thanks very much and over to you, Denise, for the hours of Centennial pool.

Denise Beard (00:41:59):

Thank you for that, I am trying to look them up. I know that they're online but at this point, Centennial Pool, we've actually dedicated that pool to our competitive swim teams at this point. Looking to open it up after Thanksgiving to community use for lap swim, aqua fitness, eventually swimming lessons. But at this point we've dedicated the pool to competitive swim teams so that they could be contained in a cohort until we felt comfortable with their return to play, and we felt comfortable with the community accessing Coughlan Pool. So we're taking it, as the Mayor has alluded to, things look a little bit different. We're taking a very slow and controlled approach. So Coughlan is our first indoor pool to open, and eventually you'll see those services move over to Centennial and Tansley Woods. What I would note is to please just, if you go onto the city's website and you check the calendar, it always is up to date with what is being offered at what time, and it has the links to register for your lap swim your aqua fitness class, or your public swim time.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:43:05):

Great. Thank you for that. Really helpful Denise. Moderator, we are ready for the next question.

Eric Vandewall (00:43:12):

Up next we have another live question. Again, a reminder: press three on your phone's keypad if you have a live question you would like to ask. We have Nicole, who's joining us now. Nicole, welcome. Please go ahead.

Nicole (00:43:23):

Thank you. My question is that there seems to be a lack of clarity with respect to when someone is to remain home from work and self-isolate. My employer is saying that you don't have to even if you came into threat-contact with someone testing positive, unless you are contacted by Public Health and advised to get tested and self-isolate. Can you please clarify the process for Halton?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:43:52):

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That's a great question, and I think that's another one for you, Eric Vandewall, our President and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital. Eric, can you speak to that?

Eric Vandewall (00:44:01):

Thanks, Mayor Meed Ward. Great question, Nicole, I'll do my best to answer. I believe the protocol should be that if you are exposed to anybody who has tested COVID positive, you should be one, considering to get a test just to determine for clarity whether or not you have contracted the disease or not. And second, that you should be in some... she should self-isolate, to be quite honest, until you have clarity as to whether you're COVID positive or negative. So I would expect what the employer should be doing is if you are exposed to somebody who's COVID positive that the employer should be saying, "I'd like for you to work at home. I would encourage you to go get a test with Public Health, get your results, and then you can determine whether it's safe for you to come back into the workplace." That self-isolation would also require you to remain isolated from family members and others until you had a clarity as to whether you are a COVID positive or negative. I hope that helps.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:44:59):

Thanks very much. I also want to give our Member of Parliament, Karina Gould, an opportunity to weigh in here. I know perhaps some folks are worried about staying home and taking sick leave if they're on work or their employer... is being asked to have them come in, and there was a big event today, a big Throne Speech. Karina can you give some insights into this question in this area and what the federal government might be doing on this?

Karina (00:45:30):

Yeah, so absolutely, I mean, I think this is one of the areas that is of most interest to Canadians and part of the reason why we were able to so effectively flatten the curve over the course of the spring was that Canadians were supported if they weren't able to go into work or if they had lost their job through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. Or many people who were on-serve and who have yet to go back to work, they will be transitioning back on to EI this weekend or on to the Canada Response Benefit for those who

Karina (00:46:03):

Maybe this weekend or onto the Canada Response Benefit for those who do not qualify for EI. One of the things that has become very clear to us at the federal level is that there are some significant gaps in our social safety net to ensure that we're there for Canadians. That's why we created the Canada Emergency Response Benefit that really did that over the course of the spring. But that was a stop gap to fill in and to make sure that we were taking care of all Canadians.

Karina (00:46:36):

Today the speech from the throne and in fact the prime minister just concluded his address to the nation, recognize that we need to create an EI system that is effective for the 21st century and really recognizes the gaps and works for people who don't qualify for EI right now, in terms of those who are self-employed or those who work in the gig economy. We have provided \$19 billion to provinces and territory for the Safe Restart Agreement. Part of what we are also working on is a 10 day paid sick leave for Canadians, that's something that we committed to in the spring and we're working through because we recognize that if you have to stay home either because you're sick or because you're taking care of someone who's sick, we need to make sure that you have those supports and so that is very much something that we are working on.

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Karina (00:47:38):

One of the challenges is, is that sick leave often is depending on which sector you work in is of the provincial jurisdiction. So we're working with our counterparts in provinces and territories to make sure that we have a leave benefit that will be there for Canadians so that if they're sick or they have to take care of a loved one who is sick and they have to miss work that they're taken care of. So those are certainly things that we are working on at the federal level to make sure that we can be there for you in your time of need.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:48:10):

Thank you so much, very timely and great to have you with us tonight.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:48:14):

Next question from you moderator, please.

Eric, Moderator (00:48:19):

We have another live question. Now it's Ken, who's joining us, Ken, welcome to the town hall please go ahead.

Ken (00:48:26):

I thank you very much. I'm having some difficulty finding the COVID protocols for doing recreational facilities in Burlington, specifically say shinny hockey. Do you have access to the change rooms? How do you sign up? Are the numbers limited? What's the wearing of masks? I can't find anything online that gives specific protocols on how you actually do the activity.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:48:54):

Terrific question and we've got just the person to answer that Denise Beard in our recreation services department. Go ahead, Denise.

Denise Beard (00:49:02):

Great question there. One of the reasons you're probably not finding anything online or regarding that as, because we are not offering shinny at this time. Shinny is a type of program that involves close contact with people that you don't necessarily know from your social bubble or cohort and it has no governing body, sports body, that looks after who's joining the game or not. So at this time that's not a service that we're providing because we don't feel that we can provide it safely to limit the contact between participants. Although shinny is a non-contact sport, you are coming technically within the six feet or two meters of each other, but you do raise some questions about arena use.

Denise Beard (00:49:47):

So we are allowing hockey teams or registered teams that are affiliated with the provincial sports body to enter our arenas. At this time they do not have access to dressing rooms, they are coming dressed to the facility, they have less than 10 minutes to get their skates on and get out onto the ice, they must wear a mask until their helmet is dawned on, and then they can remove the mask as they enter the ice pad itself.

Denise Beard (00:50:14):

So as the mayor alluded to earlier, the service looks really different and at this time we're just not prepared to

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offer the shiny program because we just don't feel that we can contain or are in contact, trace the virus to the extent that we feel comfortable doing under the current protocols.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:50:34):

Thank you very much for that, great question. Next question, please from the moderator.

Eric, Moderator (00:50:40):

We do have another live question. Quickly, we're going to do a survey question. So for everyone you can indicate your response using your touch-tone phone. We want to know, do challenges in your ability to access technology make telephone town halls an easier method for you to get important COVID information? If yes, press one, if not press two. So again, do challenges in your ability to access technology, make telephone town hall an easier method for you to get important COVID information? If yes, press one and if not, press two.

Eric, Moderator (00:51:14):

We have our next live question, that's going to be from [Beta 00:00:51:25]. Beta welcome you're joining us live, please go ahead with your question.

Beba (00:51:23):

Good evening, everybody. I'm not sure that this is me, I'm [Beba 00:51:28] actually, so if somebody else is Beta ... Hello?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:51:33):

We'll go ahead and ask your question, you're you're on the line now and we are very interested to hear what you have to say. Go ahead.

Beba (00:51:40):

Okay. Good evening everybody and thank you for taking my question. My main concern is Halloween. I do have a granddaughter, four years old, and I am so concerned about her going around in the crowd and going through other people's doors and taking candies and if she sees another kid from the street, she wouldn't be able [inaudible 00:06:03], of course. Ms. Mayor, do you have any plans to cancel trick or treat for Burlington for this year, please?

Marianne Meed Ward (00:52:11):

What a great question. Actually, that's the second time today that I have been asked about Halloween, people are really thinking very far ahead. Both those Thanksgiving, of course, and Halloween. My guess is that this is going to be also very different this year, if it occurs at all. I was talking to some of my neighbors and in the past when people were not able to be home during Halloween, they just left the candy out on the front door and it was all the honor system. That may be what some neighborhoods do, I'm really encouraging people to stay extremely local if they go out at all and not to interact with people at the door. That is probably not the best thing to do right now.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:52:57):

I don't have the authority to cancel Halloween, but we certainly can send a message closer to the time based

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on what we hear from our public health department about any suggestions they would have about this to keep people safe. The number one thing for everybody is to keep yourself safe and the best way to do that is through physical distancing and all of the other hygiene measures that we know Burlington residents have been following.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:53:25):

Great question and stay tuned on that one, we know that we will be putting out some communication closer to the time because I know that people will be asking more about that. Moderator, next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:53:40):

We have another live question. It's Eleanor, who's joining us now. Eleanor, welcome, please go ahead.

Eleanor (00:53:44):

Thank you. Good evening, everyone, thank you for taking the questions. I'm a senior and I'm wondering when the [inaudible 00:53:52] seniors center is going to be open primarily the new street one that I'm interested in, but is it going to be open and any activities for seniors? Thank you.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:54:02):

Well, the good news is that the center is actually open. So I am going to turn it over to Denise to walk you through what is available and what you can expect again, a redesigned service, but go ahead, Denise.

Denise Beard (00:54:16):

Thank you mayor and thank you Eleanor, for the question. Yes, the center has been opened since August and it is a little bit different than what you'd experienced in the past as a member, you can't just drop into the center and socialized as you have in the past, we regret to share that with membership. But what we are offering is modified programming in eight week blocks. You won't see the same depth of programming that you've seen in the past, we're really limiting it to three classes at a time happening simultaneously three times a day. That allows us to ensure that we're screening as they're coming in, that we can make sure everybody's staying within their cohorts and that gives us a great buffer time to make sure we thoroughly disinfect the rooms in between uses.

Denise Beard (00:55:07):

So the center's open, you can register online and a colleague of mine has emailed me tonight to let me know everything you need to know about fall programming is at burlington.ca/fall. So in there you'll see programming for older adults, for the swimming lessons, for skating, whatever it is that you're looking to do with recreation this fall, it's actually got its own separate link. So burlington.ca/fall, and that will give you all the information for registering and signing up for the programs that you'd like to take.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:55:40):

Great. Thank you so much for sharing that resource, Denise and great question. We are ready for our next one moderator.

Eric, Moderator (00:55:47):

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Up next we have Amanda, who's joining us now. Amanda, welcome. Please go ahead with your question.

Amanda (00:55:55):

Hi there, we have been doing virtual school, which is going fairly well and we're looking forward to a few new things coming down the line. What we have noticed is that the internet capability of the school is obviously suffering and obviously there are more teachers in physical spaces than is ideal. We've heard stories of three teachers trying to teach from one space. The teachers are doing duty in the physical schools where the schedules don't line up with the virtual schools. I'm wondering if Halton will be coming into line with other school boards to allow teachers to work from home, to reduce the stress on the internet connectivity in the physical space and all of that kind of thing.

Marianne Meed Ward (00:56:42):

Thank you for that question. And we have just the folks on the line to answer it. I will go to you first Stuart the Director of Education for the Halton District School Board and we also have Pat Daly on the line from the Halton Catholic District School Board. Go ahead, Stuart.

Stuart Miller (00:56:57):

Hi, Amanda and thanks for the question. Some boards have allowed teachers to work from home and some others have not. Our biggest concern that in the Halton District School Board that was brought to us in the spring was the complications of conductivity and interference at home, teachers being at home and having to be able to watch their own children at the same time. In fact, there were many calls for us, from teachers to be allowed to work in the schools in the spring when we were shut down, however, the schools were shut down and we weren't allowed to do that.

Stuart Miller (00:57:38):

So our job really is to try to maintain equity as best we can and consistency as best we can and the best place to do that is from our schools. Our teachers live all over the place and so it's much more difficult for us to control how they deliver the education in terms of the technology. I mean, the teachers are their own entities and they have a requirement around curriculum and they're creative and they'll do the right thing. But in terms of the technology, we needed to have a little bit of control. Having said that, we have assured the unions that we are prepared to take a look at this later on in the semester, once we see it's going, but primarily it was to address the challenges we had in the spring and to ensure equity and consistency and delivery of program.

Stuart Miller (00:58:33):

I wasn't sure about your question around virtual teachers having duty in the regular school. So I'm not sure if I ... Maybe Pat understands that better than I do, but so I'll turn it over to Pat. Thanks.

Pat Daly (00:58:51):

Thanks Stuart and we followed a somewhat similar model to the public board in terms of trying to keep teachers connected to physical buildings where possible. So for some of our staff that are still in their home school, they may have some duties associated with the school. In terms of conductivity we are testing our bandwidth use quite frequently and have found that so far so good, but certainly if there's been a specific issue at a particular building or a space issue, I think Amanda mentioned a number of people sharing the same space, Amanda, if you're from Halton Catholic and you want to reach out to me directly, please feel free to do so.

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Marianne Meed Ward (00:59:44):

Thank you so much. That's great. Great service. I appreciate both of you for answering that one. Moderator we are ready for our next question.

Eric, Moderator (00:59:52):

Up next we have a live question from Tim. Tim welcome to the town hall, please go ahead.

Tim (01:00:00):

Thank you. Actually, two quick questions for Eric. One is, who's paying for that temporary structure that's in the parking lot and its operation at Jo Brant. Secondly, with the potential of a second wave, are there any budgetary concerns at Joe Brant as there are at South Lake and the layoffs of any of our own RNs?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:00:23):

Great question. Eric, go ahead.

Eric Vandewall (01:00:27):

Hi Tim. Good evening. Thanks for your questions. So first the pandemic response unit, which is the field hospital that we have located in the parking lot at Joseph Brant Hospital. The structure has been paid for by Joseph Brant Hospital. The operating costs, we are seeking approval to have that funded by the ministry as a COVID expense, but more importantly, the PRU is serving a really important role for Burlington area. So as we prepare for a second wave in the province and in particular in the Halton Region and in the Hamilton Niagara Region, we've developed a plan with our regional hospital partners in Hamilton and Niagara so that the PRU would be used as a regional resource.

Eric Vandewall (01:01:07):

So what does that mean specifically? Well, as we know, when we were in the first phase of the pandemic, we were essentially emptying the hospital to create capacity. That resulted in a lot of surgeries, elective surgeries, and elective clinics being basically deferred for a fairly significant period of time. I think the backlog of cases is well, over 150,000 cases right across the province. So one of the key roles that the PRU will play is that we need to ensure that hospitals are not in a position where we would have to cancel or reduce surgeries again, going forward in the second wave.

Eric Vandewall (01:01:41):

Similarly, the regional programs in Hamilton, such as cardiac surgery, neurosciences, thoracic care, cancer services, these are all important regional programs that we need to ensure stay operational through a second way forward. So the PRU is going to play a role that if any hospitals start seeing more patients that will inhibit our ability to continue to provide those services, that we would start decanting those COVID patients to the PRU here in Burlington.

Eric Vandewall (01:02:10):

So I think it's playing a very important role to support not only Burlington and Halton, but also the broader Region of Hamilton and Niagara.

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Eric Vandewall (01:02:18):

Secondly you asked about budgetary constraints. So yes, like many hospitals, we are facing budgetary challenges. We have recently been working on a plan to balance our budget. We're still working through the details and we're currently in discussions with the ministry of health about that plan in terms of implications and what aspects we may be going forward with at this time and what elements we may be differing. So at this point, I don't have a definitive answer for you with respect to impacts to people, but rest assured, we are very cognizant of the importance of our people. We need our staff to help support us for a second wave and also to be available, to provide increased levels of care that we're already seeing in the Burlington hospital at Joseph Brant. So thanks for your questions Tim.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:03:05):

Thank you for that. Moderator, next question please.

Eric, Moderator (01:03:10):

Up next we have another question and the question is going to be from Alana. Alana, welcome. You're joining us live, please go ahead.

Alana (01:03:20):

Hi everybody. I just have a few things here. Do we know how many cases Burlington has right now? Secondly, do you see the counts going up in Burlington as in other parts of Ontario this week. Third, sorry to squeeze this one in, how many COVID patients are hospitalized in Burlington right now?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:03:52):

I will take an initial stab at that answer and then I'll ask Eric to speak to what's happening at the hospital. So you can actually look up the current cases on [Halton.ca](https://www.halton.ca). So Halton Region is our public health unit for all of Halton, including Burlington, and they do track the numbers, the outbreaks, the increases. The most recent check is that Burlington is at 11 active cases, which is actually slightly less than last week, where we were at 13 cases and that means some of those infections have been resolved. We're still seeing fluctuation or increases in numbers, but the active cases have gone down and most of the increase actually in Halton is in Oakville and Milton.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:04:36):

I'm going to turn it over to Eric for anything you want to add on that, but also speak to what's happening at the hospital.

Eric Vandewall (01:04:44):

Thanks very much Marianne. So currently we don't have any COVID positive patients in hospital. I think what's important to note though, is the first wave was very different from what we're seeing now, as we head into this second wave. So the first wave we saw COVID positive patients and transmission amongst all age groups, but particularly the elderly, elderly populations, vulnerable populations, people who are more susceptible to contracting the disease. Whereas in this go-round, although we are seeing increased numbers over the past week of anywhere from 350 to 478 new cases per day in Ontario, that's predominantly between the 19 and 39 years of age, age group. So very different. What that means is essentially we're not seeing the rate of

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hospitalization currently that we saw in the first phase because of the demographic that's currently contracting the disease. These are people who are out in restaurants, weddings, we've seen it on the news the types of congregations that are occurring, younger populations in bars or gyms [crosstalk 00:19:49]. So that's where we're seeing the real uptick in that demographic.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:06:04):

Ready for the next question, moderator. Thank you so much.

Eric, Moderator (01:06:08):

We have another live question coming up now. This one is going to be from Sue. Sue welcome, please go ahead. You're joining us live.

Sue (01:06:16):

Hi. I live backing on to a park and it's quite busy in the evening and there are adults and children playing probably 30 or more at a time and no masks. Is that a worry?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:06:33):

Certainly it is a worry. Thank you so much for sharing that. Folks are supposed to wear masks if they're within six feet of each other, outside it's not required, but within six feet, yes, they are supposed to be wearing masks. Eric, did you want to also comment on that from a health perspective?

Eric Vandewall (01:06:55):

Yes. Thanks. Marianne. So I would find that concerning that people aren't seeing requirements and it's so important now that we really ... people have in general, I think, a bit of COVID fatigue. We've had the kind of the lock down in the first phase and we've had a slow progression to move into stage three. So people are excited to resume their active lives and their daily routines but as Dr. Theresa Tam said, our Chief Medical Officer of Health in Canada, she said, we're really at a crossroads. I believe she's absolutely right and what she meant by that is we've now seen an increase in new cases per day in Canada, exceeding a thousand cases per day. Based on a federal modeling tool that they have available, if we don't do anything different in terms of changing behavior or seeing any additional measures being brought to bear, that number will increase to 5,000 new cases per day by the end of October. So that is a fairly significant and steep climb and I would suggest that we would be well into a second wave if that were to occur.

Eric Vandewall (01:07:59):

So I think it really is incumbent upon all of us to really hunker down right now. As difficult and as frustrating as it may be to say I really don't feel like wearing the mask this time, or I'm going to stand maybe within three or four feet of somebody versus six, we really have to stay the course on physical distancing, hand-washing, wearing a mask and doing all the things that has made Halton and in fact, Canada is so successful in combating COVID-19. So I'd be concerned in that and hopefully that moms and dads are listening and will pass the message onto their kids.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:08:37):

Thank you so much. Next question, please, moderator.

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Eric, Moderator (01:08:41):

We have another question coming up now from Shannon. Shannon, welcome, you're joining us live. Please, go ahead.

Shannon (01:08:49):

Hi. How are you? Sorry, I'm excited I've been waiting a while.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:08:54):

Great. Glad to have you on the call, that's awesome. Go ahead.

Shannon (01:08:59):

So my first question is regarding old age pension and then as well as-

Speaker 1 (01:09:03):

Question is regarding old age pension and then as well as disability. I mean, they're doing a lot of increases in payments to the general public and to everyone, but disability is still really low. I don't know if you can say anything about that...

Marianne Meed Ward (01:09:19):

Well I...

Speaker 1 (01:09:21):

... or if you know much about that but...

Marianne Meed Ward (01:09:22):

... We don't have our member of provincial Parliament on though, but the good news is we have our member of federal Parliament on the call who may be able to shed some light on this. Karina, can you speak to that?

Karina (01:09:33):

Yes, absolutely. So thank you very much for your question with regards to disability payments. So, at the federal level we have the Canada Pension Plan Disability, CPP Disability, benefit, but then we also have the tax benefit for people with disabilities as well. We also, over the summer, announced that we will be providing a one-time payment for Canadians with disabilities and this payment should be coming soon in the fall. We don't have an exact date yet. We've been getting lots of calls from interested community members to my office and feel free to get in touch with my office and we will let you know as soon as we have information.

Karina (01:10:25):

If you are eligible for the disability tax credit, you will receive a one-time, non-reportable payment of \$600 to help Canadians with disabilities. If you're eligible, but never applied for the disability tax credit or your certificate expired, you have to apply by September 25th. So that's this Friday. Again, if you have any questions, get in touch with my office, we'd be happy to help. Today actually in the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister announced that we will be revising and reviewing the disability benefits that we have at the federal level recognizing that they have fallen behind, and we need to do more to support Canadians who have

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disabilities as well as with not just income support, but also to help them find meaningful work and to be trained as well. So that in the Speech from the Throne, happy to send you more information if you contact my office. [Inaudible 01:11:25] recognize that this is an area where at the federal level we have more work to do. And so we committed to doing that today in Speech from the Throne that the Prime Minister committed to.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:11:38):

Thank you so much and we're ready for our next question moderator.

Eric, Moderator (01:11:43):

We have another live question coming up, but we're going to do a quick survey question. So everyone who's joining us, you can use your touch-tone phone to indicate do you think the city of Burlington should continue to have telephone town halls to provide important information? If yes, press one and if not, press two. So again, do [inaudible 01:12:03] continue to have telephone town halls to provide important information? If yes, press one. If no, press two. We have... Our next caller is Karen who's joining us live now. Karen, welcome. Please go ahead.

Karen (01:12:18):

Hi there. Good evening and thank you for taking my question. It's with regard to the school setting. My understanding is that if a child is symptomatic and needs to go home and is directed to get testing that they would of course remain at home in isolation until such time as they got the results of that test. I understand that siblings in the same home do not have to remain at home and can continue to school until their sibling learns whether they are positive or not. If that is correct, I'm trying to understand the thinking behind that and how we're mitigating any risk or I'd be happy to be told I'm wrong about that?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:13:03):

Thank you so much. I will ask Pat Daly, from the Executive Director of Education for Halton Catholic District School Board to weigh in. And I'm not sure if we still have Stuart Miller on the call, but he can speak too.

Stuart Miller (01:13:18):

I am. I am.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:13:19):

You are there? Okay, go ahead Pat. And then Stuart.

Pat Daly (01:13:24):

Thanks Mayor. So if a student is sent home with symptoms, they should self-isolate for 14 days unless one of the following things applies. So a doctor... Either a doctor's diagnosed them with some other illness or if they don't have a fever or if they've had 24 hours since their symptoms and they started to improve. But for... That's if they haven't actually gone for the test. Household members aren't required to self-isolate if they don't have symptoms, but in the case of a positive test, close contacts, which would include siblings, would be required to stay home if the test was positive and they'd also need to be cleared by Halton Public Health before returning to school. So I hope that's helpful.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:14:18):

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Thanks so much. Stuart, did you [crosstalk 01:14:19].

Stuart Miller (01:14:19):

And Karen I would add that this protocol has been with the guidance of Public Health Halton, which was with the guidance of the Public Health in Ontario, from the Chief Medical Officer of Ontario, and it reflects current situation in Burlington. As a matter of fact, Pat Daly and I were both on a call with the Ministry of Education today around this very issue. And in some parts of the province where there are real hot spots, the protocol is a little bit different in which kids would have to stay home, but currently in Halton the guidance from public health is that those students can go to school until there is a positive test in the household, and then they would have to be tested as well. I know that's probably not the answer you're looking for, but that's the best advice of the medical experts in the field. And not only I would say that we are obliged to follow it, we are pleased to follow it because we have such a close working relationship with public health. So with that, thanks.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:15:29):

Thank you so much. And we're ready for our next question moderator.

Eric, Moderator (01:15:33):

We have another live question coming up now from Jack. Jack, welcome. You're joining us live. Please go ahead.

Jack (01:15:40):

Yes. Good evening, Madam Mayor and staff personnel present. My question is for Eric from Joseph Brant Hospital. I had occasion to go over to Joseph Brant Hospital twice, once last month and once last week, just for some routine tests. I was very pleased with being stopped and asked the appropriate questions and the hand sanitizer and so on and so forth. Also, very pleased that my wait time was not very long and waiting rooms were not crowded, but my one question is at no time did anybody ever take my temperature and from everything I've been seeing and reading, I thought that was one of the more important protocols when entering someplace?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:16:21):

Thank you for that great question. And over to you CEO Vandewall.

Eric Vandewall (01:16:27):

Thanks very much Marianne. Great question, Jack. First, I'm glad you had a great experience at the hospital. I'm very pleased to hear that. With respect to screening, I would have expected, and I'm pretty sure this is our screening protocol, so when you first presented to the hospital, we have screeners who essentially ask you a series of questions and one of those questions would be, are you experiencing any of the symptoms? As you know, the list can be pretty exhaustive and see [inaudible 01:16:51] for sure is one of them. And so that's the basis under which we're screening. We're not actively taking temperatures at this time. We're asking people if they're having a temperature or fever.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:17:01):

Thank you for that good question. And we're ready for our next one moderator.

Eric, Moderator (01:17:07):

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We [inaudible 01:17:08] some coming up from Catherine. Catherine, welcome. Please go ahead.

Catherine (01:17:11):

Hi. Thank you very much. I was wondering if you've received any indication of when the flu shot might be available for this season and what are the... There were any plans to try to ensure that there's adequate supply of the vaccine for everyone who would like to have it?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:17:29):

Yes and yes. We certainly, through Halton Region and our public health unit, worked to make sure that there are places that people can get the flu shot. And we know that that's going to be a significantly increased this year. There was some provincial announcements earlier today on just that very thing. I'm going to ask Eric if you have any additional insights to share on that?

Eric Vandewall (01:17:56):

Yes, thanks Marianne. So there is a feeling that there will be a very significant demand for the flu shot this year. I believe that the government did announce over five million doses have been... Are going to be made available. And the best time to get the flu shot is typically between this, I'd like to quote Dr. Dale Kalina, "Between the Thanksgiving." So between our Thanksgiving and the U.S. Thanksgiving is probably the best time to get the shot. So I expected that we will start seeing that being made available through public health and other venues very shortly.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:18:28):

Thanks very much. And back to you moderator for the next question.

Eric, Moderator (01:18:33):

Up next we have a live question from Chrissy. Chrissy, who's joining us live, welcome. Please go ahead.

Chrissy (01:18:42):

Oh, hi. Good evening. Thanks for taking my question. My son is in grade seven in the public school system here in Burlington and he is in a class of 26 kids, which is fine, they're all masked, and I'm sure they're doing a great job, but my concern is about nutrition breaks, where they have their masks off and because their class is 26 kids, they are a meter apart. We're not even allowing restaurants to have tables a meter apart. I'm just wondering why this is allowed in the school system and how is this not unsafe for our kids and our families?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:19:19):

Thank you so much for that question. And I will ask us Stuart Miller, our Director of Education for the Halton District School Board if he can speak to that and Pat may want to speak to what's happening in the Catholic Board as well? Go ahead, Stuart.

Stuart Miller (01:19:31):

Thank you, Chrissy. I guess one of the things I would ask you, Chrissy, have you spoken with the principal of that school or the teachers of that school? Because the taking off the mask to eat is supposed to... It's... We had advised that it'd be staggered and so many kids had their masks on, and that they're not all off at exactly

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the same time and they're all eating, and so it was our direction, I guess, that that wouldn't be the way that those nutrition breaks would occur. So maybe something's gone amiss, or they're not really understanding the direction. So maybe we have to reiterate with our staff how that should be done, but yeah, you've raised a good point. And I think it's something that I will have to take back to our senior staff to get some messaging out there.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:20:25):

Thanks Stuart. Pat, anything you would like to add to that?

Pat Daly (01:20:29):

I don't think so. Other than, as Stuart mentioned any time there's any brief mask break, it really should be done as long as physical distancing is in place. And it's also really important that our students or adults, for that matter, wash their hands before they take the masks off, wash their hands before they put the masks back on, and follow those protocols as strictly as they can.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:20:58):

Thank you so much for that. And we're ready for our next question moderator.

Eric, Moderator (01:21:02):

Up next we have Susan who's joining us live. Susan, welcome. Please go ahead.

Susan (01:21:08):

Hi. Thank you for having me. My question, I guess, ties into the previous one. Yesterday morning, I was driving along this street, stopped at a light, and I witnessed children having a recess break. Obviously these breaks don't have masks, but unfortunately a lot of the children were extremely close. I saw two little kids hugging. The teachers were wearing masks off to the side, but I'm just wondering how these situations are monitored and what's really happening?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:21:45):

Thank you for that. I will ask Pat Daly, Director of Education for the Halton Catholic District School Board to speak to that first and then maybe Stuart you can weigh in as well. Go ahead, Pat.

Pat Daly (01:21:55):

Thanks Mayor. Yes, certainly when our students are outside, if they're unmasked, it's under the idea that they're able to physically distance. The staff that are on the yard or on duty would be [inaudible 01:22:10] that. It's something that's... There's no doubt it's a learning process for our students. We're continuing to emphasize it. We practiced it when we had our gradual return to school and it's something that we are trying to stay on top of to ensure that all of our students and our staff remain safe.

Stuart Miller (01:22:38):

Thanks, Susan. You've identified... It is... I don't... We're doing the same as Pat has described, but you've identified an issue that I think continues. One of the earlier calls talked about behavior of in parks not social distancing and so on. It is a challenge. There are teachers and educational assistants out there supervising,

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but these are our large classes. Well, 20 odd kids sometimes, and it's not easy to supervise them all. I would emphasize though, that students and particularly young kids are being asked to wear masks all day. And that's a significant challenge for some of these kids, right? But understandably. And so when they get outside, we're trying to give them as many mask breaks outside as possible, and they are supposed to be social distancing and it is something we're continuing to work on, but, I think, it is a challenge and will continue to be a challenge because student kid behavior is difficult to regulate at the best of times, let alone in these tricky times. So thanks.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:23:49):

Thank you so much for that. And we are ready for the next question moderator.

Eric, Moderator (01:23:54):

We have another live question coming up from Crystal. Crystal, you're joining us live. Please go ahead.

Crystal (01:24:00):

Hi there. Thank you for taking my question. What I would like to ask is with cold and flu season coming up, do you see us following suit with what BC is doing with pre-testing with the school boards? They've eliminated symptoms like the runny nose or a slight cough. Is that possibly going to happen with us or are we looking at isolating for those symptoms as well?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:24:26):

Thank you for that. Stuart from the Halton District School Board...

Stuart Miller (01:24:31):

Sure.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:24:31):

... can you speak to what's happening on that? And then Pat perhaps. Go ahead.

Stuart Miller (01:24:37):

Yeah, that's an excellent question. As you know, BC has dropped most of their symptoms and it's now really about a positive diagnosis of COVID. It would not really be our decision or our call. It would be in consultation with public health and guidance from Halton Public Health who would be in guidance... Who would be in consultations with the Ontario Public Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Ontario. I do know that the Ministry of Education is engaged in those conversations with public health, but where it's going to go, I really can't predict. And, but it would come from a higher level than say our board or the Halton Catholic District School Board. Pat?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:25:18):

Pat, do you want to add anything? Go ahead.

Pat Daly (01:25:20):

I don't think so. I think Stuart's got it.

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Marianne Meed Ward (01:25:24):

Okay. We are ready for our next question and probably winding down to close to the last. Go ahead, moderator.

Eric, Moderator (01:25:33):

We have one more question. It's Marilyn who's joining us now. Marilyn, welcome. Please go ahead.

Marilyn (01:25:39):

Thank you. I have been in a very safe bubble since March, but both my son and my daughter-in-law are teachers and my two grandsons are back at school and I'm wondering, is it safe for me to be in their home? And if it is, how can I... What can I do to be safe?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:26:05):

That is a great question. I'm going to ask Eric from Joseph Brant Hospital if he wants to provide some comments on that? Go ahead.

Eric Vandewall (01:26:16):

Thanks Mayor. Great question, Marilyn. Well, I think the first thing I'd be asking myself, if I was in your shoes, is I would be asking both the teachers and also the grandsons if they've had... Or the grandchildren if they've had any... Being... Having exposure to people who are COVID positive, have COVID positive tested, and being proven to be such? Also ask are they experiencing any symptoms themselves according to the list of symptoms for COVID? I think ultimately the other thing you can do to remain safe is physical distance while you're visiting, that would be certainly important within a closed space, and if you're unable to maintain that, wear a mask. So in the absence of symptoms or any of them testing positive, follow the practices. Keep yourself safe, keep the distances, and if you wanted some added assurance, either you wear a mask or ask those who you're visiting to wear a mask or both. I hope that's helpful.

Marianne Meed Ward (01:27:10):

Thank you very much for that, Bitter.

Eric, Moderator (01:27:15):

Thank you Crystal for that question. Now Mayor Meed Ward, we are just about reaching the end of the town hall with the last couple of minutes remaining. Are there some closing remarks you want to share with everyone joining us?

Marianne Meed Ward (01:27:26):

Certainly. Well, I want to give a huge thanks to our distinguished panel this evening. We had joining us for the full hour and a half Stuart Miller, our Director of Education for the Halton District School Board. Pat Daly, Director of Education for the Halton Catholic District School Board. Eric Vandewall, President and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital. Our City Manager, Tim Commisso. Mary Battaglia, our Director of Roads, Parks and Forestry. Denise Beard, our Manager of Community Development and Recreation Services. Ward Three City Counselor, Rory Nisan, and last, but certainly not least, we had our member of Parliament for Burlington, the Honorable Karina Gould joining us.

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Marianne Meed Ward (01:28:07):

And I really want to thank the community for all of your questions. They were excellent, and I'm sure that they were valuable to all others on the call in terms of getting those answers. So thank you so much for participating. We are going to do this again, probably in the new year. If you did not get your question answered, you can certainly reach out to us at the city at getinvolved@burlington.ca or city@burlington.ca and we'd be happy to take your questions and this will... This is being recorded and we will make sure that this is posted online and you can watch for details for those links shortly. We want to make sure that people who even didn't get a chance to tune in tonight can still hear the dialogue when it's more convenient time for them. So back to you moderator, and I hope everyone has a great evening.

Eric, Moderator (01:29:00):

Thank you again to everyone for joining us on this evenings town hall. If you have any questions or any feedback on today's telephone town hall, I want to remind you that you can share those with us by emailing them to us at city@burlington.ca. Again, please email questions and feedback to city@burlington.ca. Thank you again for joining us and take care.

[01:29:21]