

## Mono drops COVID-19 vaccine mandate; cacophony ensues

By **JAMES MATTHEWS**

Mono staff and councillors are no longer required to be vaccinated against the coronavirus as a condition of employment.

Despite that, the debate about vaccines brought a verbal melee less than 20 minutes into council's regular meeting Mar. 14 when council rescinded the Infection Prevention and Control Policy that's been in effect since October 2021.

The policy detailed requirements of municipal employees and council members regarding COVID-19 vaccinations. It demanded mandatory vaccination for council and municipal staff.

"The Town of Mono has a legal duty under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), to take every reasonable precaution to protect workplace health and safety, including hazards posed by infectious disease such as COVID-19 and associated variants," the policy read.

It was learned during the Feb. 28 council meeting that several residents had requested the town rescind the policy, given the direction from the province's chief medical officer of health.

It was indicated during that meeting that staff have no objections to the policy's termination.

"Removal of the policy will remove recruitment barriers and participation concerns for staff and committees," Mark Early, the town's CAO, wrote in a report to council.

"Staff have maintained a separate safety plan and policy within the office and works yard for OHSA purposes, which also addresses masking."

Mono resident Eddie Carolan said the COVID-19 vaccines were neither effective nor safe and he claimed the manufacturers have since admitted that.

"What is the council going to do to the people they have harmed by this policy?" he said. "Are they going to take responsibility?"

Carolan said the Infection Prevention and Control Policy physically and financially harmed people.

Mayor John Creelman said Carolan's assertion that the vaccines were ineffective or harmful is debateable.

"There's a division of opinion on that," the mayor said. "You have your opinion and others have a different opinion."

The town's Infection Prevention and Control Policy mirrored other similar guidelines at municipalities throughout Ontario and, in fact, Canada.

"I do not know of an instance of harm was created," Creelman said. "Inconvenience, absolutely. Disruption, absolutely. But I don't know that anyone was harmed per se."

Deputy Mayor Fred Nix said most town staff and all councillors were already vaccinated before council of the day enacted the policy.

"Maybe it affected one or two people," he said. "But that's all. The rest of us were all vaccinated."

Councillor Ralph Manktelow, who is a retired physician, said he's aware Carolan's opinion is one shared by other people.

?But, in my opinion, the vaccines were a wonderful thing that happened to us,? Manktelow said. ?It saved a lot of lives and it decreased the sickness in many, many people. Possibly including myself.?

Carolan reiterated his claim that manufacturers have attested to the vaccines' ineffectiveness.

Mono resident Michael Lang said he had a document he wanted to leave with council. That document, he said, was proof from the mRNA vaccine inventor that the shots were ineffective.

?It's not that we don't want to listen to you,? Creelman interjected. ?I think the point has been made.?

Lang broached the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and cited his right to free assembly and free speech as reasons he be permitted to continue.

?Please, after paying taxes in this township for 42 years, can I not have five minutes?? he said. ?Can we debate things? Can we at least share our ideas??

?This is Question Period,? Creelman said.

A brief cacophony of voices ensued until Creelman accepted the document proffered by Lang.

?Sorry to be difficult,? Creelman said.

?Don't be sorry,? Lang said. ?We've got to learn how to respect each other's opinions.?

What followed in the meeting served to illustrate Lang's point.

Dympna Carolan, another Mono resident, said she'd never experienced a municipality mandating a vaccine or an experimental product.

?There seemed very little opportunity not to take the vaccination, and society as a whole was shaming people [for refusing],? she said.

?Can we have a question?? said Creelman.

Carolan responded, ?Can you provide the citizen with the actual law, the lawful ability that you have to do this?? she said. ?I believe you had an opinion it was the right thing to do. And you made a policy based on your opinion but not on the actual law of the land.?

Creelman said the policy was implemented by many municipalities and school boards. When we err in terms of a policy such as this, it gets tested in the courts.

?And, as far as I know, the courts upheld our ability to have such a policy,? Creelman said.

?I would like the actual proof of that,? Dympna Carolan said. ?You're just saying I agree with it.?

?I can't put my hands on it,? Creelman said.

Fred Simpson, the town's clerk, could put his hands on it. Simpson handed the mayor a document from the Human Rights Commission.

?The Human Rights Commission, interpreting the Human Rights Code, came out with guidance on this,? Creelman said. ?And, as I recall, it was tested ... .?

Dympna Carolan interrupted: ?Guidance is not a law,? she said, and alleged that Ontario's chief medical officer of health has said there was no mandate to vaccinate given.

?Ma'am, if you'd like to get an answer, you'll have to let him finish,? Manktelow said.

?I'm asking for the law, not a guidance,? she said.

Creelman reminded those in the gallery that, to go to school, children are required to have certain vaccines to attend.

?No they don't,? Dympna Carolan said.

?They have,? Creelman said.

?You can get exceptions,? she said.

?You can get an exemption, but you have to go out of your way to get an exception,? Creelman said.

Dympna Carolan interrupted Manktelow and Creelman numerous times until the mayor called a recess.