

Dear Staff,

I hope you are all doing well as we reach the end of this month; one that marks a year since the world changed, and we all had to adapt – it's been a challenging year, and yet I know we have also all learned so much about what's truly important to us.

Even though I recognize it's been quite some time since many have been doing this, I tried something sort-of new-to-me and worked from home a bit this week. (You may remember my disaster of an, umm, work from home 'experiment' about this time a year ago.) The guinea pigs are back at the elementary school where they thankfully belong, the new puppy is a little older and a little less, umm, puppy-ish, so thankfully it went much better ... Until I had a meeting with all the GMs and saw that they had all taken over my Kingsway office! I was only gone 5 minutes ... Thankfully, it turns out that it was just a clever virtual background on Zoom. Hmmm Now I need to think about how to get them back with an 'HR-safe' prank. I'll keep you posted!

COVID-19 Update

I wanted to write to all of you as we look to what's next with COVID-19, with the administering of vaccines and the gradual re-opening of our region. While we are getting close to beating this virus, I can't stress enough that the risk is still high, and it's so, **so important that we all stay vigilant**. My greatest goal is that we get to the end of this year, having kept each other and our loved ones safe.

Even as staff start to receive vaccines, I'm asking all staff that are able to do work from home, to continue to do so, (with supervisor approval), until we notify otherwise. There may be occasional days where you need to come in, perhaps to prepare for a Board or Committee meeting, but as much as operationally possible, I'd like us to keep our numbers down in the office. When we will return back to 'normal' or our 'new normal' is still uncertain. We continue to follow the direction from our Provincial Health Officer and our Public Health officials. Some of you may be vaccinated sooner than others. The variants of concern are increasing and our health authorities have confirmed that they transmit more easily, making it increasingly difficult to stop the spread. From the science we have heard to date, it seems that the virus can still be spread even after receiving vaccination. We will provide more information as the vaccine becomes more readily available, and we hear more from our health authorities. Until then, we ask that even if you are vaccinated you continue to follow all safety protocols and work from home, if possible, for this final stretch. As always, thank you to all the staff that need to show up to site, each and every day, for our operations.

We will be able to forever look back and be proud of our response to this global pandemic – as an organization, we continued all our key operations, provided our essential, critical services, and also kept ourselves and others safe.

Together we make our region strong.

Be well,
Jerry

Jerry W. Dobrovolsky, P.Eng., MBA
Commissioner/Chief Administrative Officer

