

**Date:** December 16, 2020  
**From:** Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian  
**To:** Library Board  
**Subject:** **HPL COVID-19 Response & Planning Report**

---

## Contents

December Update.....	1
Table 1: Current Service Hours .....	2
Current COVID-19 Response.....	2
Capacity and Duration of Visits.....	2
Enforcing PPE Rules .....	3
HVAC Enhancements.....	3
Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting .....	3
Supporting Contact Tracing.....	3
Library Materials .....	3
Ontario Regulations on Libraries in Grey-Lockdown Areas .....	3
Special Note about Rationale behind HPL Grey-Lockdown Strategy.....	4
Update on Enforcement of PPE & Accommodations .....	4
Table 2: Proposed Grey-Lockdown Phase Restrictions .....	5
Table 3: Updated Branch Capacity .....	6
Appendix i: HPL Phased Reopening Plan .....	7
Principles .....	7
References.....	8

**SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT – THE PROPOSED MEASURES FOR HPL SHOULD HAMILTON MOVE TO THE GREY-LOCKDOWN STAGE ARE STILL UNDERGOING REVIEW.**

## DECEMBER UPDATE

As the pandemic risk remains relatively high in the GTHA, we are proposing that we take a pause on expanding core service hours until Q1 2021, where we can work with the Library Board to assess the impact on our ability to deliver service. We are proposing this because of the risk of increased absenteeism due to potential exposure to COVID-19 and the need to ensure staff do not report to work in-person when they should not. We are proud of the fact that we are currently offering more service than most public libraries while we also stay focused on ensuring we keep our members and library staff safe. With all the precautions we have in place, HPL is a low risk environment, however, if community spread of COVID-19 accelerates in our community, we will need to establish further restrictions to ensure we provide service as safely and reasonably possible. In October and November, HPL’s core service hours were expanded. As we enter December, HPL service hours are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: CURRENT SERVICE HOURS

Location	MON	TUE - THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
<b>GROUP 1</b> – Central, Dundas, Red Hill, Terryberry, Barton, Concession, Kenilworth, Sherwood, Turner Park, Waterdown. ( <i>Parkdale opening 2021</i> )	10 - 9	10 - 9	10 - 6	10 - 5	-
<b>GROUP 2</b> - Ancaster, Binbrook, Locke, Saltfleet, Stoney Creek, Valley Park, Westdale	10 - 6	10 - 6	10 - 6	10 - 5	-
<b>GROUP 3</b> – Bookmobile, Carlisle, Freelton, Greensville, Lynden, Mount Hope	-	10 - 6	10 - 6	10 - 5	-
<b>FRESHDESK (ASKHPL)</b> – Remote Information Service & Member Support ( <i>Phone, Email, Online Chat</i> )	10 - 9	10 - 9	10 - 6	10 - 5	

Building on the end of 2020 Library Service hours in 2021 staff will work with the Library Board to expand hours when the conditions are right. Staff will continue to closely monitor capacity, feedback, and usage patterns. The following will be key considerations:

- Prioritizing consistency and simplicity to avoid member confusion
- Investigate the restoration of Sunday service
- Expand evening hours in Group 2 locations
- Restore *Rural Extended Access* at Freelton, Lynden and expand to Carlisle and Greensville after construction projects are complete
- Respond to other critical needs as they emerge

## CURRENT COVID-19 RESPONSE

We continue to follow City and Public Health guidance, adjusting operations and planning based on authoritative guidance and the best information and evidence we have available. Our goal remains to provide as much critical service as we can, provided we can do it safely.

## CAPACITY AND DURATION OF VISITS

To support physical distancing HPL has imposed strict capacity limits system wide. We have also been monitoring capacity closely. Pre-COVID-19 HPL would normally have 72,000 in person visits per month. In recent weeks HPL has been averaging just over 15,000 visits per week in our 22 locations (See Table 3 – Capacity Limits by Location). We continue to monitor all locations closely to ensure we do not exceed capacity limits. So far there have been only a few isolated cases where we have locally reached our adjusted capacity, so we are not enforcing the recommended 2-hour daily visit limit. The following is our current direction around in person visits:

### System-wide Two (2) Hours Daily Recommended Time Limit

2-hour recommended maximum daily duration of visits. This is a guideline; it will only be enforced when a location exceeds its capacity limit. No eating or drinking allowed, however, if members need to hydrate with water, masks may only be removed for brief periods when members are actively drinking and not in close proximity to others.

## ENFORCING PPE RULES

We have all staff supplied with reusable facemasks and eye protection. We also have supplies of disposable masks. We strongly encourage the public to wear facemasks and give them a disposable mask if they do not have one. Enforcing the local mask mandate has been largely successful, although we have had instances where staff have had to address members not adhering to the rule. While we continue to track non-compliance and address it with staff and management, most mask conversations are with members reporting concerns around other members not respecting the mandate.

## HVAC ENHANCEMENTS

The City of Hamilton Facilities Division has installed new high-grade filters and has increased the flow in all our HVAC systems. During the pandemic, locations will be temporarily closed if our HVAC systems are not functional.

## ENHANCED CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Significant efforts have been made to ensure high touch surfaces throughout the Library are cleaned and disinfected several times a day. In addition, public computers are disinfected between each use. Hand sanitizer is available to members and staff throughout our system.

## SUPPORTING CONTACT TRACING

Since moving to Phase 3 HPL has supported contact tracing by requiring library visitors to have a library card or identify who they are when they enter. We are mindful that during the pandemic, reckless behaviour can result in serious health consequences for individuals and undermine our community's success at controlling the virus. In early 2021 we will review this with the Library Board and determine when to stop doing this. HPL actively works to reduce barriers for members and potential members. To date contact tracing has not posed an issue for members and only a few people have left unwilling to identify who they are. We should be aware that some individuals may hear or see the check-in process and be deterred from identifying themselves.

## LIBRARY MATERIALS

Although there is mounting evidence that quarantining materials may not reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, we are continuing to keep returned materials in quarantine for 72 hrs. We will continue to monitor this issue in partnership with other library systems and applicable legislation. We will continue to look for guidance from Public Health officials as the science evolves on surface testing and transmission. Currently, we are not allowing in branch use and sharing of newspapers, magazines and children's toys and equipment.

## ONTARIO REGULATIONS ON LIBRARIES IN GREY-LOCKDOWN AREAS<sup>i</sup>

All safety precautions we have in place will continue if Hamilton moves to Grey-Lockdown Level. We will consult the City and Public Health on these measures and any additional actions the City recommends ensuring we continue to operate as a low risk environment for staff and the public.

### SCHEDULE 3 - PLACES THAT MUST CLOSE OR THAT ARE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

#### **Public libraries**

(1) *Public libraries may only open if they comply with the following conditions:*

1. *Circulating materials must be reserved over the telephone or online.*
2. *Circulating materials may only be exchanged with members of the public through contactless drop-off, pick-up or delivery.*
3. *Patrons must only be permitted to enter the premises to facilitate contactless drop-off and pick-up or to access computers, photocopiers or similar services.*

4. *Patrons must not be permitted to be in the book stacks, or to handle circulating materials that are shelved, or in other areas of library storage.*
5. *Circulating materials returned to the library must be disinfected or quarantined for an appropriate period of time before they are recirculated.*
6. *The person responsible for the public library must comply with subsection (3), if applicable.*

*(2) The conditions set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of subsection (1) do not apply with respect to any space the library provides for,*

- (a) a day camp for children described in section 27 of Schedule 2;*
- (b) a provider of child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014;*
- (c) mental health support services or addictions support services, so long as no more than ten people are permitted to occupy the space; or*
- (d) the provision of social services.*

*(3) The person responsible for a public library shall,*

- (a) record the name and contact information of every member of the public who attends the space described in subsection (2);*
- (b) maintain the records for a period of at least one month; and*
- (c) only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the Health Protection and Promotion Act on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.*

### **SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT RATIONALE BEHIND HPL GREY-LOCKDOWN STRATEGY**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges that many residents face. With the closure of school and academic libraries for in person studying, students are using the library to access quiet study space and use our connectivity. With residents that do not have connectivity at home, HPL's computer and Wi-Fi access provides a critical service to enable them to apply for jobs, access online government services and stay connected with others. With HPL's precautions in place, we remain a low-risk environment for virus spread. The proposed Grey-Lockdown Measures will be activated immediately should Hamilton be moved to that phase by the Province or the City. HPL will continue to monitor our environment closely and the local risk of community spread of COVID-19. We will continue to seek input from Public Health and the City. We will be prepared to implement stricter measures, should circumstances warrant.

### **UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT OF PPE & ACCOMMODATIONS**

- **Face Masks** - Mandatory staff compliance with face masks. Library members provided disposable mask upon entry if not wearing one. Face shields or eye protection also required when staff can not maintain physical distancing with exempt members not wearing a face mask.
- **Alternate for Exempt Individuals** - Masks are required, exempt individuals will be required to wear a face shield as an alternative. All locations have face shields to loan or give to individuals that require them. Face shields will be disinfected and dried before reuse in cases where they are loaned. Regular customers will be provided one to keep and reuse when the situation warrants. If a vision issue is disclosed, while maintaining physical distancing Library Pages will help the person navigate the branch.
- **Additional Accommodations** - Working with partners serving vulnerable individuals and with Library members in need of supports, in January 2021 HPL will start a pilot project to offer a limited number of individuals alternative accommodation by providing a mobile connected device for an extended loan period of 1 month. Accommodated members will be required to agree to only visit the Library to pick-up holds.

TABLE 2: PROPOSED GREY-LOCKDOWN PHASE RESTRICTIONS

SERVICE	RED-CONTROL MEASURES	PROPOSED GREY-LOCKDOWN MEASURES
<b>Contact Tracing &amp; Screening</b>	All members required to check-in using library card or provide name & phone number, screening procedures followed.	All members required to check-in using library card or provide name & phone number, screening procedures followed.
<b>Service Hours</b>	See <u>Table 1: Current Service Hours</u>	Maintain existing service hours & monitor capacity and usage. Temporarily reduce hours if needed due to staff shortages. The goal is to do this in a planned way to minimize the need for unplanned temporary service disruptions.
<b>In-person visits duration for Per Day</b>	Recommended 2-hour daily maximum enforced only when capacity limits reached	<b>90 minute</b> maximum in-person visit per day (during <i>Cold Weather Alerts</i> this limit will be suspended)
<b>Library Provided Computer Access</b>	2 hours current daily maximum per person recommended	<b>1¼ hour (75 minute) maximum daily computer session</b> per person per day, no extensions allowed.
<b>Personal Device Wifi Use</b>	2 hours current daily maximum per person recommended, no limit enforced. Outdoor use of Wifi available 24X7, with no restrictions as long as physical distancing is maintained.	In library-use of Wifi is restricted to the visit duration of 90 minutes. Outdoor use of Wifi available 24X7, with no restrictions as long as physical distancing is maintained.
<b>Print Pick-up</b>	Print jobs may be picked up, standard printers and advanced printing including 3D print jobs where available.	Print jobs may be picked up, standard printers and advanced printing including 3D print jobs where available.
<b>Holds Pick-up</b>	Touchless self-check	Access to holds shelves not allowed. Staff will retrieve holds for members.
<b>Browsing of Shelves</b>	Open with contact tracing	Not permitted. Staff may retrieve requested items for Library members.
<b>Standard Member Services</b>	Issuing new library cards, assistance with check-out, printing and computer support provided as long as PPE and physical distancing rules followed.	Issuing new library cards, assistance with check-out, printing and computer support provided as long as PPE and physical distancing rules followed.
<b>In-depth Assistance Appointments</b>	Scheduled individual appointments for legal and other supports allowed. Remote support emphasized with accommodations for in person as exceptions.	Scheduled individual appointments for legal and other supports allowed. All other appointments virtual, except if special approval is granted by a Director.
<b>Programming</b>	Core online and partner led	No in-person events, online programs only.
<b>Mail Holds to Vulnerable Individuals</b>	Visiting Library Service (VLS)	Continue for VLS and reconsider for other members. Library has access to the Library Book Discount Mail program.

**TABLE 3: UPDATED BRANCH CAPACITY**

We are monitoring capacity at each location on a regular basis. Recent trends in visits shows a modest decline in visits. Except for a couple isolated incidents, we have not reached the current capacity limits. Capacity will be regularly reviewed.

*Max Public Capacity based on Estimated Square Public Footage/144.*

Location	Public Max. Calculated Capacity <sup>ii</sup>	Current Adjusted Max. Public Capacity	Proposed Grey-Lockdown Capacity
Central- 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	146 Ham Rm - 93	50	35 – computers and holds
Central 2	126	50	25 - 1 person per table
Central 3	119	50	25 - 1 person per table
Central 4	103	50	25 - 1 person per table
Ancaster	75	35	35
Barton	43	15	15
Binbrook	29	15	12
Carlisle	13	7	3
Concession	32	15– 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	12
Dundas	73	30 – 1 <sup>st</sup> floor 20 - lower level	15 – 1 <sup>st</sup> floor 10 – lower floor
Freelton	8	7	4
Greensville	11	11	5
Locke	7	7	3
Lynden	16	12	12
Mount Hope	11	4	3
Kenilworth	32	15 – 1 <sup>st</sup> floor 10 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	10-1 <sup>st</sup> floor 10-2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
Parkdale (to open in 2021)	13	7	6
Red Hill	57	30	21
Saltfleet	52	25	21
Sherwood	83	35	30
Stoney Creek	33	18	12
Terryberry	115	50 - 1 <sup>st</sup> floor - 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	40 w/study room use 28 w/out study room use and 1 person/table
Turner Park	139	70	60
Valley Park	7	4+	4
Waterdown	87	35	30
Westdale	42	25	12

## APPENDIX I: HPL PHASED REOPENING PLAN

### Introduction

This Appendix includes key parts of the **Phased Reopening Plan**. The full version is available here: <https://www.hpl.ca/sites/default/files/HPLReopeningPlanJune2020.pdf>

This plan is adapted from the *City of Hamilton's (CoH) [COVID-19 Recovery Plan – A Road Map to our New Reality](#)*<sup>iii</sup>. Its development is also informed by Hamilton Public Library's [Working Assumptions and Phased Reopening Plan](#)<sup>iv</sup> and the *Canadian Urban Library Council's (CULC) [Toolkit on Recovery & Reimagined Public Library Services Post COVID-19](#)*<sup>v</sup>.

*Authors Note: This document takes significant text from the **Hamilton Reopens Plan** and adapts it for the Hamilton Public Library (HPL). The authors acknowledge the contribution of the individuals with the CoH who have strongly influenced this plan.*

### HPL Reopens

Since COVID-19 began to spread in Hamilton in March 2020, HPL has followed the City's lead. HPL has prioritized the health and safety of residents and employees. We closed library facilities and cancelled programming and events. We quickly pivoted to offer programming and services online and reached out to support the City and community's emergency response.

### Alignment with the Hamilton's and Ontario's Reopening Framework

HPL Reopens is meant to align with the Province's framework for Reopening Ontario after COVID-19. The City of Hamilton's framework also uses a phased approach, enabling both the Province and the City to ensure appropriate measures are in place to reopen safely and limit risks to public health. HPL will take guidance from the Province of Ontario as we move between phases. However, reopening in Hamilton will depend on the pandemic situation within our city, and may not align exactly with the Province's phases. We may choose to move through the phases of reopening at a different speed than the Province, based on the conditions in Hamilton and advice from our local Medical Officer of Health.

## PRINCIPLES

Reopening of HPL's physical spaces will be gradual, safe and measured. This framework is guided by the following principles:

### 1. Protection of Public Health

The health of residents and HPL staff continues to be our highest priority. We will provide opportunities to maintain safe physical distance from others and follow good public health and occupational safety practices when reopening Library facilities and restarting programs and services.

### 2. Universal Design and Focus on the Vulnerable Sector

The principles of *Universal Design*<sup>vi</sup> will inform our approach to ensure our services are provided as barrier free as possible. We will prioritize providing access to technology and learning supports to those most in need.

### 3. Maintenance of HPL Facilities and Assets

We will consider which facilities and assets require maintenance or other actions to support Library business and operations.

#### **4. Community Priorities and Partnerships**

We will prioritize the services most valued and needed by the community. We will work with trusted partners to ensure our services complement their efforts. We will strive to provide informed referrals to those seeking information or assistance.

#### **5. Economic Recovery**

We will prioritize Library services and activities that contribute to the economic recovery of the City and the community. We will focus on supporting small businesses, job seekers and community members seeking information about supports and services available for them to help with their recovery. We will provide free online learning opportunities and supports (including technical support) to advance educational and skills advancement.

#### **6. Health, Well-Being and Productivity**

We will consider the health, well-being and productivity of employees when determining the most suitable location for them to do their best work. Through all reopening stages, staff will work remotely to support Hamilton residents. We will use specialized teams to maximize productivity and minimize staff exposure to other HPL staff members as we rapidly adapt our service model in response to COVID-19.

#### **7. Legal or Regulatory Requirements**

We will consider whether a municipal service or activity supports a legal or regulatory obligation of HPL or the City.

#### **8. Resource Availability**

We will consider the availability of resources such as staff, physical and financial resources, Personal Protective Equipment and more when making decisions. We assume a tight funding environment for 2020 and 2021 and beyond. Except for non-levy funding, any emergency expenditures we incur in response to COVID-19 will need to be self-funded by savings we accrue through service restrictions. Any loss in fee revenue will need to be offset by cost savings.

## **REFERENCES**

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200082#top>

<sup>ii</sup> Max Public Capacity based on Estimated Square Public Footage/144.

<sup>iii</sup> City of Hamilton Recovery Roadmap - <https://www.hamilton.ca/reopens>

<sup>iv</sup> HPL's Working Assumptions and Phased Reopening Plan - <https://www.hpl.ca/sites/default/files/20-05-HPLWorkingAssumptionsfor2020.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> CULC Think Tank Tool Kit - <http://culc.ca/advocacy/thinktank/>

<sup>vi</sup> Universal Design - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_design](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_design)