

Date: May 19, 2021
From: Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian
To: Library Board
Subject: HPL COVID-19 Response Update Report

INTRODUCTION

Since the April Board meeting HPL has continued to support the vaccination effort and provide service system-wide at reduced hours. The Ontario Stay-at-Home order has put strict limitations on what we can do, and many members are limiting their time and visits to the Library. At the time of writing this, we continue to provide computer access and take-out service. We continue to monitor the situation closely and look forward to enabling more members into our spaces as we move beyond the current Stay-at-Home order.

We have an update from Public Health regarding the secondments of HPL staff. We currently have 63 HPL staff members supporting the vaccination process. We are getting positive feedback from HPL staff working for Public Health and Library members have been responding well to the news that our staff are supporting the vaccination effort.

The City is looking for direction from us about how long the secondments will last. In our discussions they said they would be happy to extend all HPL staff currently seconded until the end of the year but understand that may not work for HPL. They have identified about half the group, 32 staff members (Group A) that have been playing critical roles and are asking them to stay until the end of the year. They are asking if the remaining 31 individuals (Group B) staff could stay until July 4, return in early September or stay until the end of the year. Although we will likely be under pandemic restrictions for the rest of the year, we need to balance the importance of supporting vaccinations with the need to expand core service hours beyond what we have been providing during the Stay-at-Home order.

Proposed Action: Have the 31 staff in Group B return to HPL in early July. Have 6 staff from Group A return in early September and support the remaining 25 staff from Group A to stay until the end of 2021 to continue to support Public Health.

The return of the 31 staff would enable HPL to begin to restore service hours in July. In addition, starting to fill some vacancies will enable HPL to gradually build-up of service hours in the summer and autumn. Staff are to report at the June Board meeting the plan for service hours over the summer. The level of restrictions, demand for service and capacity should be key considerations in the pace at which service hours are added.

PROVINCIAL STAY-AT-HOME ORDER

The Provincial Government announced that Ontario is under a Stay-at-Home order until June 2. Under the Stay-at-Home Order, all HPL staff who do not need to be on site for operational needs, should continue to work from home.

LOCAL MEASURES

HPL plan during the Stay-at-Home order is consistent with the regulations and was shared with the City Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), who did not have concerns with our plan.

BREAKDOWN OF SHUTDOWN MEASURES UNDER THE STAY-AT-HOME ORDER

SERVICE	STAY-AT-HOME MEASURES
BROWSING OF SHELVES	Not permitted. Staff may retrieve requested items for Members. Signage indicates stacks are not to be used.
HOLDS SHELVES PICK-UP	Not permitted. Staff retrieve Members' holds; Members self-checkout items.
IN-BRANCH SEATING & WI-FI ACCESS	In-branch seating available at computers only. Physical distancing is to be maintained. In-branch Wi-fi enabled.
PUBLIC WASHROOMS	Open with contact tracing.
CONTACT TRACING & SCREENING	All Members required to check-in using library card or provide name and phone number, screening procedures followed.
IN-PERSON VISITS DURATION FOR PER DAY	One-hour max. daily visits, while at computer stations. Exceptions for Social Services (Virtual Court Sessions, TAN Network, etc.) are allowed under Stay-at-Home Order.
LIBRARY PROVIDED COMPUTER ACCESS	One-hour computer session. Computers will be set to one hour, starting April 9 and will not extend even if capacity is not met. Local branch staff may use their discretion to manually extend for one additional hour. (Note: HPL public communication will not include this and only say we have one-hour maximum per day during the Stay-at-home order.)
LIBRARY WI-FI SERVICE	Outdoor Wi-fi use available 24X7. No restrictions provided physical distancing is maintained.
STANDARD MEMBER SERVICES	Issuing new library cards, assistance with check-out, printing and computer support provided PPE and physical distancing rules are followed. Maximum time is 15 minutes.
PRINT SERVICES	Standard printers available. Advanced printing including 3D print jobs where available (pick up only).
IN-DEPTH ASSISTANCE APPOINTMENTS	Scheduled individual appointments for legal and other supports allowed. All other appointments virtual, except if special Director approval is granted.
PROGRAMS	Limited online and partner led. No in-person events.
MAIL HOLDS TO VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS	Continue for VLS and reconsider for other Members. Library has access to the Library Book Discount Mail program.
WARMING/ COOLING CENTRES	HPL provides "Warm/Cool Centre" services while under official weather alerts. (Occurs during service hours offered at the time.)

REVIEW OF SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN PLACE

We continue to follow City and Public Health guidance, adjust library operations and plan based on authoritative guidance and the best information and evidence available. Our goal remains to provide

as much critical service as we can, provided we can do it safely. Here are key steps we are taking:

Enforcement of PPE and Accommodations

- **Masks and Face Coverings** – Staff are required to double mask. If unable to double mask, Staff must wear a medical mask. Library Members are required to wear a face covering. A face covering means a medical or non-medical mask or other face covering such as a balaclava, bandana, scarf, cloth, or other similar item that covers the nose, mouth, and chin without gapping. Library Members are provided disposable medical masks upon entry (if not wearing a face covering). Face shields or eye protection are also required when staff cannot maintain physical distancing with exempt Members not wearing a face covering.
- **Alternate for Exempt Individuals** – Face coverings are required. Exempt individuals are required to wear a face shield as an alternative. All locations have face shields to loan or give to individuals who require them. Regular customers are provided a face shield to keep and reuse when the situation warrants. If a vision issue is disclosed, staff help the person navigate the branch verbally and guide the Member, while maintaining physical distancing.
- **Additional Accommodations** – HPL works with partners serving vulnerable individuals and Library Members in need of supports. In 2021, HPL launched a pilot project to offer a limited number of individuals alternative accommodation by providing a mobile-connected device for a one-month extended loan period. Accommodated Members will be required to agree to only visit the Library to pick-up holds.
- **Maintaining Physical Distancing and Wearing PPE** while working on-site is critical. We are seeing very good compliance from staff; however, this needs to be maintained at all times. Please ensure you are in compliance at all times.

Increased Emphasis on Remote Work

The regulation mandates us to ensure people who can work from home, do so. We know that supporting operations requires staff to be present in our spaces, so working from home is not an option for many. Key points:

- Our focus during this heightened period of pandemic risk is to ensure we only have the staff onsite to support onsite-specific work. All other staff, including staff working FreshDesk, will work from home.
- Staff working from home should only come into the Library when it is necessary to do so for business reasons.

HVAC Enhancements

- City of Hamilton Facilities Division installed new high-grade filters and increased flow in all HPL HVAC systems. During the pandemic, locations are temporarily closed if a HVAC system is not functional.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Significant efforts are made to ensure high touch surfaces throughout the Library are cleaned and disinfected several times each day. Public computers are disinfected between each use. Hand sanitizer is available throughout the system for Members and staff.

Library Materials Quarantine

- HPL is currently following the provincial regulation from The Government of Ontario that requires a period of quarantine. Libraries across Ontario are moving to a 24-hour period of isolation for returned library materials.

- Members can decide to isolate items at home before using them. They may also decide to use the library's vast digital resources.
- We will monitor this issue in partnership with other library systems and applicable legislation. We will continue to look for Public Health guidance as the science evolves on surface testing and transmission. Currently, we do not allow in-branch use or sharing of newspapers and children's toys and equipment.

LOCAL HOT SPOTS

We are working closely with Public Health to monitor identified hot spot areas in Hamilton. We will continue discussions regarding further safety measures to be considered for those local library locations.

STAY-AT-HOME ORDER RESTRICTIONS

On April 3 2021 O.Reg 82/20: Grey-Lockdown and Shutdown was updated. On April 8 2021 a Stay-at Home Order went into effect for Ontario. There is no legislative change for 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) Revoked: O. Reg. 239/21, s. 3 (1).

(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 10 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