

Date: June 16, 2021
From: Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian
To: Library Board
Subject: HPL COVID-19 Response Update Report

INTRODUCTION

On Friday, June 11, Ontario moved to Step 1 of its reopening plan. See Appendix I of this document for an overview of Ontario's updated Reopening Plan. COVID is not over, but mass vaccinations point to a gradual easing of restrictions starting in the summer. The key unknown is the extent to which virus variants may slow the process of reopening and restoring activities.

The regulations for Step 1 are listed below. The regulations for Step 2 and 3 have not yet been released. This plan will be updated should assumptions made about restrictions in Steps 2 and 3 be incorrect or if we receive guidance from Public Health or the City of Hamilton that requires us to amend our plans.

REGULATION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES STEP 1ⁱ

1. (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. Revoked: O. Reg. 440/21, s. 12 (2).
 6. The person responsible for the public library must comply with subsection (3), if applicable.
- Note** – The material quarantine regulation has been revoked effective June 11.

GOALS OF THE NEXT PHASES OF THE PANDEMIC

Starting with the move to Step 1 on June 11, HPL will begin the process of a gradual buildout to our new full-service portfolio over the next 12-18 months. Staff will work with the Library Board to develop a clear and positive vision for HPL that will enable us to unify staff, residents and key stakeholders around our unique role in helping Hamiltonians thrive and stay connected.

1ST PRIORITY – LIBRARY SERVICE HOURS

The City of Hamilton has indicated that in person group events will not be restarted until 2022. The **1st priority will be to ensure that systemwide HPL has consistent and robust service hours – we should be open when people need us to be and we need to ensure service hours are simple and can be clearly communicated to residents.**

KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE RATE OF SERVICE HOURS RESTORATION

The rate at which service hours are restored will be informed by:

- **Staff Capacity** – available staff to support in branch services.
- **Restrictions we are Under at the Time** – Restrictions impact how many people we can serve in our spaces at a time, they also create extra work for staff that restricts our ability to deliver service (i.e. extra cleaning, checking-in members).
- **Demand for Service at the Time** – We will need to monitor changes in demand for service and when that service should be offered. For example, we are currently not experiencing a demand for service in the evenings or Sundays.

INCREASING STAFF CAPACITY

The building out of staff capacity to expand library services will be supported by the following strategies:

- **Secondments** – Staff will continue working with the City to have HPL staff return from secondments supporting the vaccination effort. The first large group of returning staff will happen between July 5 and 12 and a smaller number are scheduled to return in September. Staff will review the status of the secondments in September/October with the Library Board.
- **Start Filling Vacancies** – HPL currently has at least 24 full-time and 17 part-time vacancies. There are also other temporary leaves. During the pandemic the need to physically distance has made the job of onboarding staff more challenging. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in June has started the process of filling some vacancies. We anticipate this will be a gradual process but as restrictions are lifted, we anticipate we will be able to accelerate the process.
- **Extra Hours for Part-time Staff** – To help accelerate the process of building out service, part-time staff have been offered to work extra hours for the months of July, August and September. This is voluntary but will help staff make some extra income while also increasing our capacity.

BEING MINDFUL OF PANDEMIC RELATED STRESS ON STAFF

The last 15 months have been challenging for most people. We know that stress related to the pandemic has increased challenges to people's sense of wellbeing and their overall mental health. Our staff are not immune to this. As we build out our services, we need to ensure that we support staff's wellness. Many of our staff have been on the frontlines throughout most of the pandemic. In addition to ensuring effective supports are in place, ensuring we create a stable work environment that does not overwhelm staff with constant changes will be important to restoring a sense of normalcy. As part of the library's research partnership with McMaster University an emotional labour survey will be distributed to staff and staff have access to Canadian Mental Health Association emotional resiliency counselling in addition to City of Hamilton Employee Wellness resources.

INTENTIONAL RESTART TO IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

As staff work through the implementation of the new ***Working with Us Policy*** (*Policy on Programs, Partnership and Space Usage*)ⁱⁱ we are proposing an intentional and gradual restart of in-person events and programs in 2022. We will be reporting back to the Library Board later in 2021 about our plans, but here are our initial thoughts about how that should work:

- We will be more focused on outcome-based programs and ensuring we better understand the impacts we are working towards
- We will be looking at our program schedule through an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework and applying Universal Design Principles, so we are not creating barriers to participation. One of our most important strengths is our ability to work with people of different ages, cultural and economic backgrounds – our application of an EDI Framework needs to be about enhancing mutual understanding, respect and empathy. We are in a unique position to be able to do this in such a broad and impactful way with community partners and the *Working with Us Policy*

PROPOSED SERVICE HOURS ROLLOUT

As we work to hire and on-board staff, we are proposing a sequential building out of service hours that will follow the steps outlined below. **The recommendation is for staff to establish the new base service hours system wide and then start building out from that. Staff are to review their progress with the Library Board at the September Board meeting and determine next steps.** We anticipate we will be able to start restoring Monday service at some locations before the end of the summer, but we still are not sure to what extent.

	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
Current Hours (March to June) – All Locations	1pm – 6pm	1pm – 6pm	1pm – 6pm	1pm – 6 pm	1pm-5pm
New Base Service Hours (Starting July 5)	10am – 6pm	10am – 6pm	10am – 6pm	10am – 6pm	10am – 5pm

- **Implementation of the New Base Service Hours-** With staff returning from secondments between July 5 and July 12 we want to get to a new base of service hours as soon as possible. We anticipate moving the following locations to this new base for Tuesday, July 6 - CE, TE, TP, DU, RH, BA, CN, LO, WA, SA, SH, KE, AN & BI. Other locations would be phased in over the summer and with the reintroduction of Extended Access at FR, LY and the new GR when it opens.
- **Parkdale** – open sometime in July.
- **Greenville** – open later in the summer or early fall. Ideally, we have it ready for the school opening in September.
- **Monday Service** – start restoring Monday service to some larger locations.
- **Earlier Opening** – start opening some locations at 9am.
- **Evening Service** – start restoring evening service to some larger locations.
- **Sunday Service** – likely not return until 2022 but to be reviewed in September/October.
- **Evening Study Halls** – select locations open from 9pm – midnight for quiet study will likely not return until 2022 but this also to be reviewed in September/October.

BREAKDOWN OF MEASURES DURING THE REOPENING STEPS

*Each Step will last a minimum of 21 days. Best case scenarios would see Step 2 starting July 2nd with Step 3 starting on July 23rd.

SERVICE	STEP 1 - JUNE 11	STEP 2*	STEP 3*
QUARANTINE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS	The updated regulations do not require libraries to quarantine library materials. HPL will phase out the quarantine period in the week following June 11.		
BROWSING OF SHELVES	Not permitted. Staff retrieve requested items for Members.	Access to stacks permitted.	
HOLDS SHELVES PICK-UP	Not permitted. Staff retrieve Members' holds; Members self-checkout items.	Members retrieve their own holds and self-checkout items.	
IN-BRANCH SEATING & WI-FI ACCESS	In-branch seating available at computers only.	In branch seating is available at computers and at other furniture.	
PUBLIC WASHROOMS	Open.		

SERVICE	STEP 1 - JUNE 11	STEP 2*	STEP 3*
CONTACT TRACING & SCREENING	All required to check-in using library card or provide name and phone #, simple screening procedures followed.	Contact tracing to phased out except where required.	
IN-PERSON VISITS DURATION FOR PER DAY	1-hour max. daily visits,	2-hour daily max to be enforced locally when capacity is exceeded	3-hour daily max to be enforced locally when capacity is exceeded.
LIBRARY PROVIDED COMPUTER ACCESS	1-hour computer session no extensions.	1-hour computer session, 1-hour extension when capacity not exceeded.	1-hour computer session, 2-hour extension when capacity not exceeded.
CAPACITY OF OUR SPACES	Throughout the pandemic HPL has set the capacity of our spaces at lower numbers than the regulations require. In Step 2 we will begin the process of a stepped increase of capacity based on the regulations and advice from Public Health.		
LIBRARY WI-FI SERVICE	Outdoor Wi-fi use available 24X7. Indoor Wifi available. 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.	Same as before but 15-Minute Max. no longer applies.	
PRINT SERVICES	Standard printers available. Advanced printing including 3D print jobs where available.		
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, except Central to be open on closed days.)		

REVIEW OF SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN PLACE

Enforcement of PPE and Accommodations

- Masks and Face Coverings** – We had been requiring staff to double-mask to increase their self protection. If they were unable to double-mask then they would wear a medical mask. With many already getting vaccinated we are making double-masking for staff optional. 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 snugly 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.

Remote Work

HPL will continue to support remote work as appropriate. We know that supporting operations requires many staff to be present in our spaces, so working from home is not an option for many.

HVAC Enhancements

City of Hamilton Facilities Division installed new high-grade (MERV 13) 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. Over the summer we plan to scale back some of the computer cleaning and provide disinfectant wipes for Members that was to clean their stations for use.

APPENDIX I - PROVINCIAL REOPENING PLANSⁱⁱⁱ

On Friday, June 11 Ontario moved to Step 1 of its reopening plan. If at the end of the 21 days the province has met the following thresholds, and there are continued improvements in other key public health and health system indicators, the province may move to the next step of the roadmap:

Step 1: 60% of adults vaccinated with one dose

Step 2: 70% of adults vaccinated with one dose and 20% vaccinated with two doses

Step 3: 70 to 80% of adults vaccinated with one dose and 25% vaccinated with two doses

Step 1 – beginning Friday, June 11, 2021

An initial focus on resuming outdoor activities with smaller crowds where the risk of transmission is lower and permitting limited retail with restrictions. This includes:

- outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people
- outdoor dining with up to four people per table
- non-essential retail at 15% capacity

Step 2 – not before July 2, 2021

Further expanding outdoor activities and resuming limited indoor services with small numbers of people and with face coverings being worn. This includes:

- outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people
- outdoor sports and leagues
- overnight camps
- personal care services where face coverings can be worn and with capacity limits
- indoor religious services, rites or ceremony gatherings at 25% capacity

Step 3 – not before July 23, 2021

Expanding access to indoor settings, with restrictions, including where there are larger numbers of people and where face coverings can't always be worn. This includes:

- indoor sports and recreational fitness
- indoor dining
- museums, art galleries and libraries
- casinos and bingo halls with capacity limits

Public Libraries

Before Step 1	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
- Curbside pickup for materials - Access to computers, photocopiers, and similar services permitted		Open with 25% capacity and other restrictions	Open, with capacity limited to permit physical distancing of 2 metres and other restrictions

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

ⁱⁱ <https://hpl.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=1067&MeetingID=95>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario>