

**Date:** March 16, 2022  
**From:** Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian  
**To:** Library Board  
**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 Response and HPL Services

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## INTRODUCTION

On March 9, 2022 the Provincial Government announced updates on restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The mask mandate will be lifted in Ontario in most settings on March 21, with remaining restrictions set to expire on April 27. This report outlines next steps for HPL based on the information we have available today. When the Province publishes the regulations, and we learn what Hamilton Public Health advises we will need to make modifications to this plan.

## PUBLIC HEALTH RESTRICTIONS IMPACTING HPL

Several of the remaining provincial restrictions will be lifted on March 21. We don't know yet if Hamilton will align exactly with what Ontario is doing. Here is a summary of the how things will change from our current state:

### Masking Rules

- **Members** – On March 21, we will no longer require members to wear a face shield if they are exempt from wearing a mask. We will take people at their word. As soon as the City rescinds the local Masking Bylaw, we will make masks optional for members. We will continue to provide members that request a mask with a free mask.
- **Library Staff** – We are waiting to hear what the City of Hamilton advises regarding staff. It is likely that staff will be required to wear a mask at least for now. Once that requirement is removed we will make masking optional for staff and continue to provide free medical masks to staff that wish to wear them.

### Capacity and Physical Distancing

We are currently required to support physical distancing and that has caused us to be cautious about adding back too much furniture too quickly. Although we are starting to get busier, we have not had to turn people away because of a lack of capacity. We have been taking a gradual approach to adding back furniture. On March 21, unless directed otherwise by Public Health, we will accelerate our process of adding back furniture. In some cases, we will not be returning to exactly how the furniture was set-up before COVID-19.

### In-Person Group Events

Our long pause for in-person group gatherings in our spaces is finally coming to end. Because we are still in the process of getting our staffing in place and some of our program rooms are still being used for storage, we will be taking a gradual approach to a return to in-person activities. The order of progression about what we are going to do is shaped by the **Working with Us** policy and our concern that COVID-19 still presents some risks, so we should be cautious about having large groups of people in our spaces. Here is how we are planning for our restart:

- **In-person Group Meetings** – Beginning April 1, we will begin allowing some in-person meetings. We will be prioritizing meetings with strategic partners and to begin with, we will require SLT approval for them to happen.
- **In-person Group Programs** – Beginning May 1, we will be restarting in person group programs. Programs will be phased in over time under the direction of the Program Committee. We need to be mindful not to divert too much staff time to programs when we are still offering reduced hours.

### Staff Gatherings and Business-Related Travel

- **Staff Meetings and Social Gatherings** – Beginning in May, we will gradually shift to hybrid staff meeting options, allowing flexibility to attend virtually or in person. Gatherings that are social in nature will be dependent on local guidelines but will resume in June or over the summer.
- **Business Travel**- Out of an abundance of caution we will limit business related travel for 2022 to meetings and conferences within Canada.

### SERVICE HOURS ROLLOUT

Below are the current hours and next steps for expanding service hours across the system. We will review capacity and how operations are going as we build in additional hours. We will continue to update the Library Board and work with you on establishing our new full core service hours. The goal is to add service each month, as we gain capacity, until we reach the Library Board approved Service Hour plan.

Location	Hours of Operation
<b>March 7th</b>	
Central, Barton, Kenilworth, Dundas, Waterdown, Locke, Terryberry, Turner Park, Red Hill, Parkdale	Monday- Friday 9-6, Saturday 9-5
<b>March 14th</b>	
Ancaster, Saltfleet, Stoney Creek, Valley Park, Sherwood, Westdale*	Monday- Friday 9-6, Saturday 9-5
<b>March 21st</b>	
Concession, Binbrook, potentially Westdale*	Monday-Friday 9-6, Saturday 9-5
<b>Rural with Extended Access (EA) Locations</b>	
<b>March 7th</b>	
Greensville, Freelon	Monday- Friday 9-6, Saturday 9-5
<b>March 14th</b>	
Lynden	Monday- Friday 9-6, Saturday 9-5
<b>Rural- non Extended Access Locations</b>	
Mount Hope, Carlisle	Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1-6 Tuesday, Thursday 10-3 Saturday 12-5

BKMB will continue offering regularly scheduled service Tuesdays-Saturdays until late 2022 (as capacity allows). Westdale Terryberry roof work will begin April 4<sup>th</sup>.

HPL will continue to build out service hours by expanding to 7pm as the next step, and beyond in the coming months.

Additional notes about service:

- **Evening Study Halls** – Our Study Halls program keeps select locations open from 9pm – midnight for quiet study Monday to Thursday. We will likely pilot one location later this year to help assess demand.
- **Sunday Service** – Proposing return to Sunday service in January 2023. To be confirmed in November/December.