

**Date:** March 4, 2021  
**From:** Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian  
**To:** Library Staff  
**Subject:** Updated Red and Grey Restrictions

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## INTRODUCTION

City of Hamilton’s Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) requested Hamilton Public Library (HPL) to second Library staff to temporarily support the community vaccination effort. This is an EOC request, not a directive.

HPL’s [Pandemic Continuity Plan](#) states: “HPL’s overriding concern during a pandemic is helping protect the public and staff from coming to harm. To do this we will make it a high priority to support public health and emergency management efforts”. After reviewing this and subsequent plans that consistently place a high priority on supporting the public health response, HPL’s Leadership Team and Library Board approved this request, knowing we would need to make temporary changes to Library service.

Thanks to the support of the City of Hamilton, HPL has provided more library service during the pandemic than many other public libraries. HPL has decided to temporarily scale back Library Service hours while under the provincial Red-Control restrictions and the increased risk and restrictions from Covid-19 variants.

## Anticipated Secondment Period

Staff will be seconded for approximately three months as of March 17<sup>th</sup>. Actual dates may be adjusted based on public health needs. Our customer service staff have ideal experience to serve in non-clinical roles to support the community vaccination centres. The City is currently recruiting new hires for these sites but that will take time. We will work with the City to have our staff return to HPL at the appropriate time. As capacity allows and local pandemic restrictions are relaxed, we will restore service as quickly as we can. Current restrictions prevent us from providing Library service to the number of residents that we typically serve. Helping accelerate the community vaccination process now is an ideal way for our staff to contribute to our community.

## TEMPORARY LIBRARY SERVICE CHANGES

DESCRIPTION	DETAILS
Library Service Hours*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freshdesk – Mon to Fri. <b>10am to 6pm</b>; Sat. <b>10 am to 5pm</b></li> <li>All branches - Tues. to Fri. <b>10am to 6pm</b>; Sat. <b>10 am to 5pm</b></li> </ul> <p>All locations including AskHPL (FreshDesk) as of March 15:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temp. Hours - Tues. to Fri. <b>1pm to 6pm</b>; Sat. <b>1pm to 5pm</b></li> </ul>
Digital Collections & Digital Access	There will be no impact to digital collections access like eBooks. Computer use, Wifi and printing will not be impacted except for hours in-branch activities are available.
Service Standards	Staff will continue to make best efforts to promptly complete routine tasks such as Grab and Go bags, filling holds, checking-in

	items, however, staffing capacity will cause some tasks to take longer than normal.
<b>Library Programs</b>	During this period, we will continue to advertise partner/community programs and promote our collection of recorded online programs. Hamilton Reads and other programming will continue as operational capacity allows.
<b>Other Services</b>	The Bookmobile will serve one route; no impacts to the Newcomer Learning Centre (NLC), Visiting Library Service (VLS). Local History and Archives (LHA) and Collections/Technical Services will continue to operate but at reduced capacity. Internal operations like courier, processing and sorting of materials, Digital Technology, Human Resources and Finance & Facilities will continue to provide service to ensure we can operate effectively.

Note – We are finalizing secondments with the EOC and we will expand service as we're able from the baseline identified).

### REVISED RED-CONTROL PHASE RESTRICTIONS

The main service impact visible to Library members will be a reduction in service hours. In addition, we are making some adjustments to our service plan while operating under the Red-Control phase. These changes only impact HPL when we are in Red-Control.

- **Branch Capacity** - Adjustments to the maximum number of library members permitted in our locations at a given time. This change reflects our reduced in-branch staffing. See Branch capacity table below.
- **Daily Time Limits** - We recommend one-hour duration of daily visits to our branches. This is only enforced as we reach capacity limits. For computer users, the time limit of one-hour is extended automatically when computer use is available at that location at that time.

During the pandemic, we have rarely reached local capacity limits. We regularly monitor capacity to support physical distancing.

### BREAKDOWN OF RED AND GREY CONTROL MEASURES

SERVICE	REVISED RED-CONTROL MEASURES	GREY-LOCKDOWN MEASURES
<b>BROWSING OF SHELVES</b>	Open with contact tracing.	<b>Not permitted.</b> Staff may retrieve requested items for Library members. Signage will indicate stacks are not to be used.
<b>HOLDS PICK-UP</b>	Touchless self-check.	<b>Not permitted.</b> Staff retrieve holds for members; members self-checkout items.
<b>IN-BRANCH SEATING &amp; WIFI ACCESS</b>	Seating available at computers & other spaces provided physical distancing is maintained. In-branch Wifi enabled.	Sitting only allowed at computer stations. Personal device use, reading etc. are allowed while sitting at a computer. In-branch Wifi enabled.
<b>NO CHANGE BETWEEN RED AND GREY</b>		
<b>PUBLIC WASHROOMS</b>	Open with contact tracing.	
<b>CONTACT TRACING &amp; SCREENING</b>	All members required to check-in using library card or provide name and phone number, screening procedures followed.	

<b>*IN-PERSON VISITS DURATION FOR PER DAY</b>	<b>One-hour max. daily visits</b> enforced when capacity limits reached. (During <i>Cold Weather Alerts</i> , this limit is suspended.)
<b>*LIBRARY PROVIDED COMPUTER ACCESS</b>	<b>One-hour max. daily computer session</b> per day. Automatic extensions of up to one-hour if capacity is not reached.
<b>LIBRARY WIFI SERVICE</b>	Outdoor Wifi use available 24X7. No restrictions provided physical distancing is maintained.
<b>STANDARD MEMBER SERVICES</b>	Issuing new library cards, assistance with check-out, printing and computer support provided PPE and physical distancing rules are followed.
<b>PRINT SERVICES</b>	Printers are available. Standard printers and advanced printing including 3D print jobs where available.
<b>IN-DEPTH ASSISTANCE APPOINTMENTS</b>	Scheduled individual appointments for legal and other supports allowed. All other appointments virtual, except if special Director approval is granted.
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	Limited online and partner led. No in-person events.
<b>MAIL HOLDS TO VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS</b>	Continue for VLS and reconsider for other members. Library has access to the Library Book Discount Mail program.
<b>WARMING CENTRES</b>	HPL provides "Warm Centre" services while under official cold-weather alerts. (Occurs during service hours offered at the time.)

### Notes about Local Capacity Limits

**\*Regulation for Public Max Public Capacity** during COVID-19 is based on the following formula:

- Estimated Square Public Footage (ESPF) divided by 144 [ $ESPF/(12 \times 12)$ ]. This supports a six-foot radius around each person. Stacks and other physical barriers create natural barriers that support physical distancing.
- The **Grey Max. Capacity** number is reduced to account for restrictions on the following activities: computer use, public washroom access and in-branch holds pick-up.
- The **Red Max. Capacity** number is stricter than the regulations allow to ensure we can manage our spaces.
- If capacity numbers are temporarily exceeded by a few people while under Grey or Red that is not a problem if staff are able to support physical distancing. Repeated challenges with managing these very low capacity limits should be reported promptly to your Director. The Emergency Response Team (ERT) will address these challenges.

### LOCATION CAPACITY LIMITS

LOCATION	Public Max. Capacity during COVID-19	RED MAX. PUBLIC CAPACITY	GREY MAX. PUBLIC CAPACITY	# of Public Computers
Central- 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	146 Ham Rm - 93	50	35 – computers and holds	25
Central 2	126	50	12	12
Central 3	119	50	10	10
Central 4	103	50	5	0
Ancaster	75	35	11	5
Barton	43	15	10	8
Binbrook	29	15	7	5
Carlisle	13	7	5	1
Concession	32	15– 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	9	7
Dundas	73	30 – 1 <sup>st</sup> floor 20 - lower floor	10– 1 <sup>st</sup> floor 0– lower floor	4

Freelton	8	7	6	2
Greenville	11	11	5	2
Locke	7	7	3	0
Lynden	16	12	10	2
Mount Hope	11	4	3	2
Kenilworth	32	15 – 1 <sup>st</sup> floor 10 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	10-1 <sup>st</sup> floor	5
Parkdale (to open in 2021)	13	7	6	-
Red Hill	57	30	15	12
Saltfleet	52	15	10	8
Sherwood	83	35	20	9
Stoney Creek	33	12	10	3
Terryberry	115	50	28	21
Turner Park	139	70	16	11
Valley Park	7	4+	4	3
Waterdown	87	40	20	9
Westdale	42	25	10	3

## REVIEW OF SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN PLACE

As more is learned about COVID-19 and how to reduce transmission, we are focused on ensuring we operate as safely as possible. We continue to follow City and Public Health guidance, adjusting operations and planning 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 and some new measures we are considering:

### Enforcement of PPE & Accommodations

- **Masks and Face Coverings** - Mandatory staff compliance with double masking or if unable to double-mask, at minimum wearing 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 one 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 with Library members in need of supports. In 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 one month. Accommodated members will be required to agree to only visit the Library to pick-up holds.

### **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 an 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 to members and staff throughout the system.

### **Library Materials Quarantine**

Although there is mounting evidence that quarantining materials may not be needed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, as a precautionary measure, the Government of Ontario still requires a period of quarantine, so libraries across Ontario are moving to a 24-hour period of isolation for returned library materials. As of March 15 we continue to keep returned materials in quarantine for **24** hours.

In addition to being aligned with the latest scientific evidence, this change will also benefit members:

- With a shorter period of isolation, wait time for holds will decrease.
- As items are checked in sooner, members will have a more accurate list of what they have checked out in their library account.

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, magazines and children's toys and equipment.

REALM tested large amounts of the virus on different types of surfaces in a controlled situation. While virus particles are detectable on surfaces after periods of time, transmission is unlikely to occur in real-life conditions.

### **Additional Resources:**

- [“Hygiene Theater is still a huge waste of time”](#) in THEATLANTIC.com, February 8, 2021
- [“COVID-19 Rarely spreads through surfaces. So why are we still deep cleaning?”](#) in NATURE.com, January 21, 2021
- [“COVID-19 Routes of Transmission – What we Know So Far”](#) from Public Health Ontario, December 1, 2020
- [“It's Time to Talk About Covid-19 and Surfaces Again”](#) in WIRED.com, October 28, 2020
- [“Exaggerated risk of transmission of COVID-19 by fomites”](#) in THELANCET.com, July 3, 2020