Peterborough Public Health

Serving the residents of **Curve Lake** and **Hiawatha First Nations**, and the **County** and **City of Peterborough**

COVID-19 Guidance:
City of Peterborough downtown during spring & summer months

Introduction

In Ontario, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been guided by the Ontario COVID-19 Response Framework.[1] This framework has been developed to keep Ontario businesses operational, while at the same time dictating various restriction levels based on the transmission of the virus and capacity of the health care system. The framework imposes more restrictions for indoor settings and businesses, which means that for some sectors, the Framework supports outdoor activities and services. With this in mind, Peterborough Public Health (PPH) anticipates that the warmer weather will increase demand on our outdoor public spaces, particularly in the City's downtown core.

The following guidance and recommendations have been developed to support the City of Peterborough's 2021 plans for the downtown space for the spring and summer seasons. These recommendations have been developed based on the following objectives:[2]

- Mitigate the risk of increased transmission.
- Protect vulnerable/high-risk populations and settings.
- Maintain the health care and public health capacity demands below critical levels.
- Increase social and economic activity with appropriate conditions and controls in place.
- Monitor impacts to inform decision-making regarding modifications to approach.
- Frequent and transparent communication to the public to highlight their role in reducing the risk of COVID-19.

What is the risk associated with COVID-19 transmission in outdoor settings?

Over the past year, the entire world has continued to learn more about the COVID-19 virus, risk of transmission, and measures needed to control the spread. Public health officials have continued to monitor research and best practice to ensure evidence-informed decision making is occurring at local, provincial, and national response levels. Analysis of the COVID-19 cases in Canada to date continue to reinforce that risk factors associated with transmission of COVID-19 include close contact of 2 metres or less, crowded spaces, closed spaces, and forceful exhalation.[3,4]

Over the past few months, new variants of the COVID-19 virus have emerged. "Based on the observed rapid rise in incidence and the higher secondary attack rates, reproductive number (Rt) and viral load, VOCs appear

[1] Government of Ontario. (2021, March 12). COVID-19 response framework: Keeping Ontario safe and open. Retrieved from: https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open

[2] Government of Canada. (2020, May 30). Guidance for a strategic approach to lifting restrictive public health measures. Retrieved from: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/lifting-public-health-measures.html

[3] Public Health Ontario. (2020, December). COVID-19 Routes of Transmission. What We Know So Far. Retrieved from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/covid-wwksf/2020/12/routes-transmission-covid-19.pdf?la=en

[4] Government of Ontario. (2021, March 12). COVID-19 response framework: Keeping Ontario safe and open. Retrieved from: https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open

to have higher transmissibility than other non-VOCs."[5] Additionally, there is evidence of higher risk of hospitalization and death from VOC infection.[6]

Personal public health measures, such as keeping a minimum distance of 2 metres from anyone who is not from the same household, staying home if you are ill, frequent hand washing, and wearing a non-medical mask continue to be the most effective preventative measures, for COVID-19 VOCs and non-VOC transmission.[7] When these personal public health measures are coupled with outdoor settings with good air flow, rates of COVID-19 transmission are quite low.[8]

For these reasons, residents and businesses across the Peterborough region should be encouraged and enabled to get outdoors as much as possible. Activities where physical distancing can be maintained and physical contact with other persons minimized, for example solitary activities and those enjoyed by household groups, represent the lowest risk for COVID-19 transmission.[9]

Why modify the downtown area for the spring and summer months?

The City of Peterborough downtown area is one of the busiest areas in the Peterborough region. This is due to a combination of the high density of residential buildings, businesses, services, and public spaces. While this important mix of uses are needed to foster conditions favourable for long-term health and wellbeing, this does pose challenges for each individual using this space to effectively apply personal public health measures, in particular physical distancing.

Businesses across the Peterborough region have shouldered heavy burdens throughout this pandemic. From reduced indoor capacity limits to long periods of closure, many local businesses need numerous supports to ensure they can continue to operate throughout COVID-19 and beyond. In light of this, businesses are supported through the Ontario Covid-19 Response Framework to modify their operations to offer outdoor sales and/or curb-side pick-up.[10] Businesses in the downtown area have limited resources to expand outdoors or offer curb-side pick up due to competing needs of abutting spaces. To ensure the downtown businesses can be afforded the same opportunity as all businesses in our region, outdoor sales and curb-side pick up areas for downtown businesses should be created. However, it is critical that any space granted for this business activity must not jeopardize the ability for another downtown user to safely implement their personal public health measures, primarily, the ability to physically distance from others (e.g., outdoor sales areas must not compromise physical distancing potential for sidewalk users).

[5] Public Health Ontario. (2021, February) COVID-19 B.1.1.7 (501Y.V1) Variant of Concern – What We Know So Far. Retrieved from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/covid-wwksf/2020/12/what-we-know-uk-variant.pdf?la=en, pg. 1
[6] Ibid
[7] Government of Ontario. (2021, March 12). COVID-19 response framework: Keeping Ontario safe and open. Retrieved from: https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open
[8] Public Health Ontario. (2020, August). COVID-19: Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems in Buildings. Retrieved from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/2020/09/covid-19-hvac-systems-in-buildings.pdf?la=en
[9] Government of Canada. (2020, Oct 15). Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Canada. Retrieved from: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html
[10] Government of Ontario. (2021, March 12). COVID-19 response framework: Keeping Ontario safe and open. Retrieved from: https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open

What are the personal public health measures all residents need to practice?

Until the majority of our residents have acquired full immunity from a COVID-19 vaccine, personal public health measures are required.[11] The following measures are fundamental to a community's COVID-19 response and must continue to be applied even during the warmer spring and summer months:

- Anyone feeling ill should remain at home and not go out in public.
- Staying at home as much as possible if at risk of more severe disease or outcomes, this includes individuals who are:
    - older adults (increasing risk with each decade, especially over 60 years)
    - people of any age with chronic medical conditions:
        - lung disease
        - heart disease
        - high blood pressure
        - diabetes
        - kidney disease
        - liver disease
        - stroke
        - dementia
    - people of any age who are immunocompromised, including those:
        - with an underlying medical condition (e.g., cancer)
        - or taking medications which lower the immune system (e.g., chemotherapy)
    - people living with obesity (BMI of 40 or higher)
- People who do not reside in the same household must maintain a minimum of 2 metres of physical distance from each other.
- A face covering/non-medical mask must be worn at all times in an indoor public space.
- For outdoor settings, it is strongly recommended that a face coverings/non-medical mask be worn anytime 2 metres physical distancing cannot be predictably maintained (i.e., walking on the sidewalk, walking on the platform at the transit terminal, waiting at a busy intersection).
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Practice responsible respiratory etiquette and cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces should be increased and signage must be provided where this is not possible (e.g., picnic tables at parks).
- Reduce personal non-essential travel.
- Limiting outings and public gatherings as per provincial legislation.

What risk mitigation strategies can be applied to the City of Peterborough downtown area?

There are numerous adaptations that can be applied to the City's downtown to ensure all users can safely use and access this space. The risk mitigation potential for the City's downtown is based on the types of controls that can be used to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission within this setting.[12] The mitigation potential is based on the modified hierarchy of controls (figure 1), in which measures are considered more protective to

[11] Government of Canada. (2020, Oct 15). Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Canada. Retrieved from: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html

[12] Ibid

less protective in this order: physical distancing, engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE)/non-medical masks (NMM).[13]

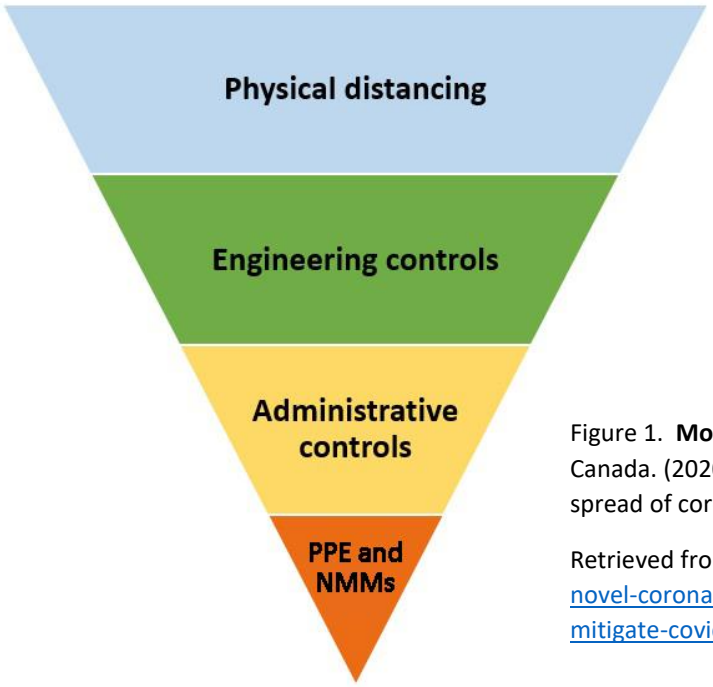

Figure 1. **Modified Hierarchy of Controls.** Retrieved from: Government of Canada. (2020, Oct 15). Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Canada.

Retrieved from: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html

To maximize risk mitigation potential, the City of Peterborough and downtown businesses should consider a "layered" approach where they implement multiple types of controls and mitigation measures aimed at reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission, including decreasing the number of interactions with others and increasing the safety of interactions. Layering of multiple mitigation measures strengthens the risk mitigation potential overall and ultimately makes the downtown area a safer place for all. Critical components of the risk mitigation also include communication about risk mitigation measures applied, and promoting personal public health practices that everyone must follow. Table 1 provides PPH's recommendations for a variety of mitigation strategies based on the hierarchy of controls model.

[13] Rivers, C., et al. (2020). Public health principles for a phased reopening during COVID-19: Guidance for governors. Retrieved from: https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf

Table 1: Community-based public health mitigation strategies

	Physical Distancing	Engineering Controls	Administrative Controls	PPE & NMM
Description of Control Categories	Strategies to maintain a 2-metre distance between individuals and reduce time spent in close proximity.	Strategies to create physical barriers between individuals and reduce exposure to common surfaces.	Strategies to change the way people interact with the setting in order to reduce risk (*e.g., through changes to business policies or practices*)	Equipment worn/used by a person to prevent spread of the virus
Mitigation Measures	• Ensure sufficient public realm for all necessary activities to take place *(e.g., pedestrians, queue lines, etc.).* This means that **all** individuals must be able to maintain 2m of physical distance between each other *(e.g., one individual requires 4m^2 of space to ensure proper physical distancing*). • Promoting essential trips only to the downtown. • Promoting staying home if you are sick. • Businesses should continue to offer modified shopping by offering online sales, delivery, and shipping. • Support businesses with curb-side pickup by offering designated pick-up spots along streets that have a large number of retail. • Support businesses with designated exterior queue spaces or an outside retail desk to minimize the number of people in an indoor setting at one time. Queue spaces should be appropriately marked to ensure 2m between everyone in line. • Support and encourage businesses (primarily food premises) to implement reservation systems to prevent queue lines and unnecessary crowding. • Ensure appropriate signage and a thorough communications strategy detailing changes.	• If sidewalks do not provide enough space for physical distancing, remove parking and other traffic lanes to create space for physical distancing. Ensure any space that abuts a travel lane (e.g., *pedestrian space, amenity space*) has a barrier or is clearly delineated and signed.[14] • On streets with low traffic volumes, consider designating the street as "local access only" to reduce vehicle volumes and speeds, while at the same time providing the full street for all users to distance.[15] • Conduct continual pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow assessments to monitor for crowding and/or pinch points. • Deactivate any intersection with touch button signals and change to a timed pedestrian crossing. • Non-essential common areas should be closed. • For indoor and outdoor retail spaces, ensure a 2m space between retailer and customer, or include the use of clear barriers (*e.g., plexiglass*). • Ensure appropriate signage and a thorough communications strategy detailing changes.	• Work with local businesses to stagger the hours of retail businesses vs. restaurants to minimize competing space demands *(e.g., retail spaces use outdoor sidewalk space during the day, restaurants use outdoor sidewalk space at night for patios*). • Promote active modes of travel to minimize the amount of square footage each visitor would need (*e.g., travelling by private vehicle requires more square footage*). • Promote designated parking zones at the entrance to the downtown to encourage park and walk to shops and services. • Reduce traffic speeds to increase safety for all road users. • Increase the frequency of environmental cleaning for indoor and outdoor high-touch surfaces. • Non-contact waste receptacles should be available indoors and outdoors. • Increase access to handwashing and sanitizing (*e.g. by opening public washrooms in the downtown and placing hand sanitizer dispensers in prominent locations*) and ensuring these are accessible for individuals with disabilities or other accommodation needs. • Businesses can provide special accommodations for clients from vulnerable groups (*e.g. dedicated shopping hours for seniors and people with immune compromising or underlying medical conditions*). • Businesses post accessible signage to discourage shopping from anyone who is ill. • Ensure appropriate signage and a thorough communications strategy detailing changes.	• Individuals must wear nonmedical masks in indoor public spaces **and** should be advised to wear them in any outdoor space where 2 metre physical distance cannot be predictably maintained from others.[16] • Consider a bylaw that would require individuals to wear non-medical masks while on sidewalks in the downtown. • PPE can be used appropriately as per usual practice or as required for workers by the occupational health and safety legislation or local public health authority (*e.g., if employees will be within 2 metres of others*).
Mitigation strategies based on guidance from: • Freeman, S & Eykelbosh, A. (2020, April 14). COVID-19 and outdoor safety: Considerations for use of outdoor recreational spaces. National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. Retrieved from: ncceh.ca/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20Outdoor%20Safety%20-%20April%2016%202020.pdf • National Association of City Transportation Officials & Global Designing Cities Initiative. (2020, June). Streets for Pandemic Response & Recovery. Retrieved from: https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Streets_for_Pandemic_Response_Recovery_Full_20-09-24.pdf				

[14] National Association of City Transportation Officials & Global Designing Cities Initiative. (2020, June). Streets for Pandemic Response & Recovery. Retrieved from: https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Streets_for_Pandemic_Response_Recovery_Full_20-09-24.pdf
[15] Ibid
[16] Pan-Canadian Public Health Network. (2020). Use of non-medical cloth masks or face coverings in community settings. Retrieved from: http://www.phn-rsp.ca/sac-covid-ccs/wearing-masks-community-eng.php

How to monitor and evaluate?

A robust monitoring and evaluation strategy for any changes to the downtown is critical to the success of this plan. Ongoing monitoring is needed in the short-term to determine if there are unintended consequences emerging. Any unintended consequence would need to be addressed immediately to ensure the public's health and safety. Possible unintended consequences of the downtown area modifications could include:

- traffic pinch points
- crowds
- gatherings
- accessibility issues
- higher pedestrian volumes than anticipated
- dangerous traffic speeds
- a particular demographic unable to access the downtown

Public health monitoring of the local COVID-19 situation is ongoing throughout the pandemic. Monitoring indicators include:

- Epidemiology of the virus
    - Incidence rate
    - Percent positivity
    - Reproductive rate
    - # of outbreaks
    - Level of community transmission

- Health system capacity
    - Hospital and ICU capacity

- Public health system capacity
    - Case and contact follow-up capacity

Conclusion

In conclusion, due to the competing demands for public space in the City's downtown during the warmer months, risk mitigation measures are needed to ensure personal public health measures can be applied safely and effectively by all who use and access this space. Any risk mitigation measure must ensure that physical distancing of 2 metres can be maintained between anyone who is not from the same household, as well as ensuring that accessibility to the downtown is possible for all members of our community.