



TORONTO  
FINANCIAL  
DISTRICT

# Best Practices for Return to Work in the Financial District: Version 1

April 22, 2020



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>3</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>KEY ASSUMPTIONS</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>COMMON AREAS</b>
7	GENERAL
8	ELEVATORS
8	STAIRS AND ESCALATORS
9	BUILDING ENTRANCES (AT GRADE)
9	WASHROOMS AND DRINKING FOUNTAINS
9	LOBBIES / HALLWAYS / SEATING AREAS
10	CONCIERGE AND SECURITY STATIONS
10	MAILBOXES / DELIVERY AND PICKUP AREAS
10	PARKING OPERATIONS AND ACCESS
10	VALET AND VEHICLE DETAILING OPERATIONS
11	WELLNESS CENTRES AND EXECUTIVE FACILITIES
11	VISITOR ACCESS
11	PRIVATELY-OWNED PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE SPACES (POPS)
<b>12</b>	<b>PATH</b>
12	GENERAL
12	HOURS OF OPERATION
12	POINTS OF ENTRY AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PROPERTIES
13	PINCH POINTS
13	GRADE CHANGES
13	TRANSIT STATIONS AND ACCESS POINTS
<b>14</b>	<b>FOOD COURTS</b>
14	GENERAL
14	LANDLORD AND FOOD COURT TENANT COMMUNICATION
14	QUEUING
15	SEATING
<b>16</b>	<b>TENANTS – OFFICE</b>
16	GENERAL
16	DENSITY AND ORIENTATION OF SPACE AND TRAFFIC FLOWS
17	SCHEDULES, BREAKS AND LATE POLICIES
17	SHARED WORKSTATIONS AND MEETING SPACES
17	TENANT IMPROVEMENTS
<b>18</b>	<b>TENANTS – RETAIL AND FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>PROPERTY OPERATIONS</b>
18	LANDLORD WORKERS
19	SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

19	CLEANING AND DISINFECTION
19	HVAC AND WATER SYSTEMS
20	GOODS MOVEMENT / LOADING DOCK FACILITIES / BUILDING OPERATED COURIER AND PICK-UP SERVICES
20	PROTOCOL FOR POSITIVE CASES
20	FIRE DRILLS
21	CONTRACTORS
21	PARKING
21	TENANT APPRECIATION
21	LEASING
<b>22</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>
22	KEY MESSAGES
22	TENANT COMMUNICATIONS
22	COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS
<b>23</b>	<b>NEXT STEPS</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Financial District is Toronto's primary employment hub, with more than 200,000 workers. Unique attributes of the area, including the PATH pedestrian walkway, Union Station, and subway station connections, create challenges in managing moving volumes of people through a relatively compact area.

**Ensuring the comfort and safety of returning workers is the overriding principle governing these recommendations.**

**It is critical that a uniform approach to physical distancing is focused on instilling new social protocols for movement throughout the Financial District.**

### METHODOLOGY

At the request of landlords developing return to work plans, the Toronto Financial District BIA has created a consolidated list of recommended best practices for return to work in the Financial District.

Recommendations in this report are based on discussions with several Financial District landlords and research of best practices being implemented in countries further along with return to work operations.

These recommendations are intended to guide decisions and encourage a uniform approach to operations and messaging.

### KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Several key assumptions related to public behaviour and expectations have been used to inform the recommendations in this document. These assumptions, which are based on best practices related to physical distancing and personal hygiene, have been outlined in detail in the introduction.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary focus of these recommendations is to address implementation of manageable protocols to enable physical distancing while balancing the need to operate large commercial buildings with high volumes of workers.

We have identified four key areas where a uniform approach from landlords is of paramount importance:

- Creating new social protocols for movement of people in common areas, particularly elevators and the PATH pedestrian network.
- Establishing a consistent approach to health screenings, including whether or not buildings implement them at all, for landlord workers and individuals entering properties.
- Ensuring consistent use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for public-facing landlord workers.
- Implementing consistent, clear communications of social protocols related to physical distancing and personal hygiene.

Recommendations in this report are necessarily broad to account for the varying operations of individual properties. Recommendations do not include technical specifications; landlords should employ industry best practices as applicable.

Recommendations are subject to changes in government regulations.

### UPDATES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This report is a baseline document. Updated versions will be issued as new information becomes available.

## INTRODUCTION

The Toronto Financial District BIA Board of Management requested staff complete a review of best practices for return to work in the Financial District as COVID-19 restrictions are reduced. This report recognizes that currently, a fully formed public policy for returning to work has not yet been developed, and recommendations must be flexible. There is no off-the-shelf playbook for this unique situation and return to work will have varying approaches by industry and region.

### INTENT AND SCOPE

This report presents recommendations that will provide guidance to allow for a uniform and consistent approach for returning to work in the Financial District. Through these recommendations, we aim to provide a higher level of comfort for returning workers in the Financial District. To that end we have considered unique features of the district, such as transit access and PATH connectivity. We recognize that building conditions will dictate the implementation of these recommendations on a site-by-site basis and have provided general recommendations in each report section.

### METHODOLOGY

The primary sources for this report are telephone interviews with representatives from several landlords in the Financial District, including BentallGreenOak, Brookfield Properties, Cadillac Fairview, Oxford Properties and QuadReal Property Group. These interviews were completed April 15-17, 2020.

Recommendations in this report also incorporate best practice research conducted by Toronto Financial District BIA staff and a consensus from landlords on subject areas.

In developing this report, we have identified that clear communication with the TTC and GO Transit is an important action for the Financial District BIA to pursue in the coming weeks. The impacts of volumes on transit operations during the return to work phase have yet to be determined and we have not speculated about the impact in this version of the report. The Financial District BIA will incorporate guides from these agencies for future updates.

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**LANDLORD:** Includes all functions of the landlord including Property Management, Tenant Relations, Operations and any contracted services including cleaning and security contractors.

**TENANT:** The business entity that is the lessee of either office or retail space.

**WORKER:** Employees of landlords or tenants.

**GENERAL PUBLIC:** People that may enter common areas and privately-owned publicly-accessible spaces such as the PATH.

**VISITOR:** An individual that is not a worker but enters the premises of a tenant for business purposes.

## KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Just as business led government on establishing remote work protocols and closing down non-essential services as we entered this crisis, we should expect that business will lead in implementing best practices for return to work. The following key assumptions are incorporated in the framing of the recommendations in this report:

### **SOCIAL/PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

The basic 2 metre physical distancing rule is clearly understood by workers and the general public and will likely be part of social behavior for some time. In some instances, elements of the urban fabric (transit, elevators, pinch points) may limit the practical application of this rule.

### **HANDWASHING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE**

Requirements for handwashing and personal hygiene are clearly understood by workers. Opportunities should be used to re-enforce these messages.

### **USE OF FACE MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

The use of non-medical face masks in public has been demonstrated to assist in reducing viral spread from asymptomatic individuals. **Landlords should assume that a regulatory requirement for masks in public will be put in place. In the absence of any regulatory requirement, public-facing landlord workers should wear masks as part of newly established social protocol.**

### **HEALTH SCREENING PROTOCOLS**

Testing is an important control measure in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Discussions of best practices for employers have included use of temperature scans, health surveys, and antigen testing. Efficacy questions related to the ability to accurately detect infections led to a number of concerns related to implementing testing protocols. **Landlords have indicated that their preference is not to conduct health screening or thermal scans on individuals entering the building unless ordered to by health authorities. However, landlords have discussed the potential to implement these measures for their workers.**

### **PHASED IN APPROACH TO FULL OCCUPANT LOAD**

Tenants will likely bring workers back to the office gradually.

### **FLEXIBILITY IS KEY**

Measures need to have flexibility and landlords should be prepared to respond to and communicate regulatory change.

### **PROMPTS FOR THE NEW NORMAL**

The recommendations in this report will require workers and visitors to adopt new social behaviours. We are recommending that landlords invest resources in prompting these behaviours based on the assumption that providing a safe work environment will create significant value for tenants.

### **SUPPLY CHAIN RISK**

Supply chain challenges for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and sanitation products remain a critical risk for landlords, tenants, workers, and the general public.

## PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Public health regulations and guidelines issued by municipal, provincial and federal governments will supersede the recommendations in this guide. Summaries of emergency orders can be found online:

- [City of Toronto](#)
- [Province of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)

To date, government orders have been driven by three broad considerations:

1. Physical distancing (2 metres between people)
2. Wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when physical distancing is not possible
3. General hygiene and etiquette, including:
  - Regular hand washing
  - Avoiding touching your face
  - Staying home when sick
  - Safely disposing of tissues and used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The provincial government is likely to lead the development of regulations related to the reopening of workplaces in the Financial District, and the City of Toronto is likely to update its regulation of public spaces as the situation develops.

It should be noted that all levels of government may make recommendations that are not legally binding, but are widely obeyed, such as the Toronto Chief Medical Officer's 'strong encouragement' for bars and restaurants to close by midnight on March 16, 2020.

## INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Currently, a global collective body of knowledge on best practices for return to work post COVID-19 does not exist. The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) has leveraged its international experiences to develop resources [\[LINK\]](#) for commercial real estate professionals, including webinars, links to relevant articles, websites, and expert analysis, while encouraging active monitoring of best practice updates from official health sources. BOMA Toronto has also established a Back to Work Taskforce. It is expected that this report will inform the task force as it develops a toolkit for building owners.

On April 21, 2020, Cushman & Wakefield hosted a webinar for commercial real estate professionals related to recovery readiness with an accompanying guide for reopening workplaces. The information presented in the guide is generally aligned with the recommendations contained in this report, with a few exceptions that include greater technical detail for specific property operations. The report can be found here [\[LINK\]](#).

As countries around the world are at different stages of COVID-19 progression, some are beginning to implement measures to return to the workplace. BOMA China presented a case study outlining measures taken by a major office building in Guangzhou to manage the return to work. Although the safety of tenants, workers, visitors, and the general public is paramount, being mindful of significant cultural, political, and legal differences across countries should be accounted for in determining what measures to implement in Canada.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in the Introduction, the recommendations below are based on aggregated information provided by landlords in Toronto's Financial District, as well as a review of international practices implemented in countries which have already loosened COVID-19 restrictions. Landlords were in the early stages of considering their plans when interviews were completed. These recommendations reflect a general consensus in each area and typically include the most restrictive approach under consideration or currently being implemented.

It is anticipated that many of these restrictions will initially require a high level of staff and resource commitment which may be scaled back as new social protocols are adopted by returning workers.

## COMMON AREAS

The evaluation of common areas reflects spaces generally found in buildings.

### 1. GENERAL

A number of recommendations are applicable to all common areas and have been summarized below. Additional specifics are provided based on location as warranted. This document does not include recommendations for technical protocols related to equipment and materials. Rather, we encourage landlords to incorporate best practices based on industry standards.

#### Recommendations

- 1.1 Provide enhanced cleaning and disinfection of high frequency touchpoints.
- 1.2 Provide signage with key messages related to physical distancing and hygiene throughout common areas.
- 1.3 Permanently deploy hand sanitizer stations throughout common areas.
- 1.4 Permanently deploy specialized waste disposal receptacles and signage for used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), particularly at transition points such as entries/exits, elevator bays, food courts, and washrooms.

#### Additional Considerations

- 1.5 Consider investment in touchless technology for key areas (building entrances, washrooms, parking facilities).



## 2. ELEVATORS

The size of elevator cabs eliminates the ability to meet physical distancing protocols of 2 metres without limiting passengers to one or two people per cab. It is virtually impossible to operate large commercial buildings under this condition. There is a pressing need to clearly communicate new social protocols. Recognizing this, the following recommendations are resource-heavy at the outset with a reduction of resources over time as social protocols become more established.



### Recommendations

- 2.1 Limit passenger elevators to four (4) passengers per cab.
- 2.2 Instruct passengers to select destination and move to the furthest open space from the door.
- 2.3 Deploy decals in elevators to indicate where passengers should stand and which way they should face.
- 2.4 Deploy signage with elevator key messages (spacing, orientation, etc.) at all elevator bays on all floors.
- 2.5 Provide security or other staff at each elevator bay to communicate new protocols to workers and visitors.
- 2.6 Provide queuing lines with adequate space for physical distancing.
- 2.7 Require visitors to check in at a security/concierge desk before boarding an elevator to above-grade levels.
- 2.8 Disinfect elevator touchpoints (buttons, handrails, doors) and apply disinfectant spray every two hours.

## 3. STAIRS AND ESCALATORS

These recommendations pertain to grade changes in common areas. Due to concerns related to safety and security, it is not recommended that emergency stairwells be opened for access to tenants and workers. **The stair and escalator protocol in recommendation 3.1 should be reviewed by landlords with their retail properties to ensure a uniform approach.**

### Recommendations

- 3.1 Establish protocols for stair and escalator use:
  - 3.1.1 Keep right
  - 3.1.2 No passing
  - 3.1.2 Three stairs between individuals
- 3.2 Where possible, designate common area stairs as UP or DOWN only.
- 3.3 Provide signage with stair/escalator key messages to communicate new protocols.
- 3.4 Provide queuing areas with adequate space for physical distancing for high-traffic stairs and escalators.

#### **4. BUILDING ENTRANCES (AT GRADE)**

Currently, many properties have limited access at grade due to low occupancy levels. Landlords are encouraged to monitor use of entrances and adjust access according to volume, with the goal of providing the highest level of comfort to workers seeking to keep physical distance. Increase in access should be communicated to other Financial District properties via the Financial District Security Group.

##### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Continue to limit access to property based on level of occupancy. Scale up access as building occupancy increases.
- 4.2 Where possible, dedicate access points as IN or OUT to minimize close contact.
- 4.3 Deploy signage with key messages at all open entrances and exits.
- 4.4 Deploy hand sanitizers at all entrances and exits.
- 4.5 Deploy specialized waste disposal receptacles for used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and appropriate signage with key messages at all entrances and exits.
- 4.6 Provide queuing lines with adequate space for physical distancing at high-traffic entrances and exits.

#### **5. WASHROOMS & DRINKING FOUNTAINS**

Washrooms are a particular area of concern for landlords, tenants, and workers. It is critical that landlords implement practices to ensure a high level of comfort that these facilities are clean and physical distancing protocols can be maintained.

##### **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Ensure “last serviced” signage is clearly visible and legible and communicates the landlord’s commitment to providing a safe facility.
- 5.2 Install government-issued signage related to hand-washing hygiene.
- 5.3 Deploy floor decals to communicate physical distancing key messages.
- 5.4. Provide queuing lines with adequate space for physical distancing in heavily used facilities.
- 5.5 Provide door signage limiting capacity of facility based on size.
- 5.6 Install specialized disposal for used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and post signage with key messaging on appropriate disposal.
- 5.8 Install hand sanitizers at restroom access points.
- 5.9 Drinking fountains and water bottle refill stations should be removed from operation.

##### **Additional Considerations**

- 5.10 Evaluate opportunities to implement touchless technology.

#### **6. LOBBIES / HALLWAYS / SEATING AREAS**

Individual properties have unique attributes and the recommendations below are intended to provide broad guidance for the movement of people in these common areas. These recommendations are predicated on the ability to implement them within the constraints of government regulations.

##### **Recommendations**

- 6.1 Deploy decals and signage to orient movement within lobbies and hallways with particular attention to pinch points.
- 6.2 In pinch point areas, use stanchions, signage and decals to designate direction of movement and reminders to maximize ability to physical distance by keeping right and not passing.
- 6.3 In pinch point areas, use stanchions to create an open space between lanes of pedestrian traffic moving in opposite directions.
- 6.4 Remove group seating areas or designate physical distance parameters by using temporary measures to close off seats in groupings accommodating multiple individuals.

## **7. CONCIERGE AND SECURITY STATIONS**

Protecting workers, visitors and the general public at concierge/security stations is a key component of front of house operations. Best practices are geared toward ensuring a high level of comfort and educating workers, visitors and the general public on new social protocols, particularly as adapted for individual properties.

### **Recommendations**

- 7.1 Install plexiglass barriers at security and reception desks.
- 7.2 Deploy physical distancing signage and or decals to delineate space.
- 7.3 Provide queuing with appropriate physical distance markings for high-traffic facilities.

## **8. MAILBOXES / DELIVERY AND PICKUP AREAS**

These areas have unique characteristics based on existing property configuration and operations. Recommendations in this area are limited due to the variety of factors involved; however, implementation of the general common area best practices should be included as well as consideration of the below.

### **Recommendations**

- 8.1 Designate access times as appropriate to limit high volumes of individuals accessing the area concurrently.

## **9. PARKING OPERATIONS AND ACCESS**

Parking operations vary by property, and many recommendations applicable to other common areas remain applicable in parking operations.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.1 Implement appropriate measures as addressed in 2. ELEVATORS, 4. BUILDING ENTRANCES and 7. CONCIERGE AND STATIONS.

### **Additional Considerations**

- 9.2 Evaluate opportunities to implement touchless access and operations.
- 9.3 Evaluate opportunities to implement online purchasing of parking for monthly and transient parkers.

## **10. VALET AND VEHICLE DETAILING OPERATIONS**

Some Financial District properties operate valet and vehicle detailing operations. Until such time as operations are able to safely resume, it is recommended these operations remain suspended.

### **Recommendations**

- 10.1 Continue suspension of valet parking and vehicle detailing operations until physical distancing restrictions are lifted.

## **11. WELLNESS CENTRES AND EXECUTIVE FACILITIES**

Many properties in the Financial District operate some form of wellness and/or executive facility for tenants and their workers. It is critical to balance the need for tenants to access amenities with the landlord's ability to manage health and safety in these facilities.

### **Recommendations**

- 11.1 Suspend access to landlord-operated wellness centres until government restrictions on similar facilities are lifted.
- 11.2 Upon reopening, reorient facilities to maximize physical distancing.
- 11.3 Upon reopening, limit access to facility to a capacity that accommodates patrons' ability to physical distance.
- 11.4 Upon reopening, establish enhanced cleaning and disinfection schedule.
- 11.5 Upon reopening, provide signage and materials to encourage patrons to clean equipment following each use.
- 11.6 Provide specialized waste disposal receptacles and signage for used cleaning materials and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

### **Additional Considerations**

- 11.7 Evaluate opportunities to implement touchless technology as appropriate.

## **12. VISITOR ACCESS**

Discussions with landlords highlighted a recurring concern from tenants regarding visitors' ability to access floors above designated common areas. It was noted that the nature of returning workers would likely impact how this restriction would be removed.

### **Recommendations**

- 12.1 Require visitors to check in at security/concierge.

## **13. PRIVATELY-OWNED PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE SPACES (POPS)**

Landlords should take into consideration operation and use of their privately-owned publicly accessible spaces such as plazas and sidewalks within the property boundaries.

### **Recommendations**

- 13.1 Limit access to plazas and green space based on capacity of space and ability to control physical distancing.
- 13.2 Properties unable to monitor and proactively encourage physical distancing in plazas and green space should close these areas.
- 13.3 Events in POPS should be postponed until physical distancing restrictions are lifted.
- 13.4 For sidewalks and accessible POPS, landlords should ensure adequate receptacles are available for disposal of used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- 13.5 Implement enhanced cleaning of POPS.

## PATH

The PATH pedestrian network is a unique amenity central to the operation of Toronto's Financial District. Primarily privately-owned, the PATH's operation is managed by numerous individual properties. The recommendations below have been developed to provide best practices guidelines where implementation is applicable within government regulations.

### 1. GENERAL

Similar to common area amenities, there are basic recommendations common to all areas of the PATH.

#### Recommendations

- 1.1 Provide enhanced cleaning and disinfection of high frequency touchpoints.
- 1.2 Provide signage with key messages related to physical distancing and personal hygiene throughout the PATH.
- 1.3 Permanently deploy hand sanitizer stations in appropriate locations.
- 1.4 Permanently deploy specialized waste disposal receptacles and signage for used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), particularly at transition points such as entries/exits, elevator bays, food courts, and washrooms.

#### Additional Considerations

- 1.5 Evaluate opportunities to install touchless technology.

### 2. HOURS OF OPERATION

Hours of operation in the PATH are currently limited to 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday to Friday and closed on weekends. Normally the PATH is open the same hours as TTC subway service. It is expected these limited hours of operation will remain in effect until such time as building occupancy increases and/or adjusted schedules as determined by tenants warrants reconsideration of these hours.

#### Recommendations

- 2.1 Continue limitations on hours of operation until majority of PATH-connected properties reach sufficient capacity to justify resuming normal hours.
- 2.2 Conduct weekly review of capacity and operating schedules of tenants in PATH-connected buildings to inform decision making.
- 2.3 Communicate adjustments to operating hours and requirements through the Financial District Security Group to the Financial District BIA and appropriate transit partners (TTC, Metrolinx).

### 3. POINTS OF ENTRY AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PROPERTIES

In addition to the general recommendations provided above, the recommended best practices below should be implemented where possible to ensure ease of movement, adequate physical distancing and minimizing contact with high frequency touchpoints.

#### Recommendations

- 3.1 Deploy connecting doors in the open position during operating hours to minimize contact with touchpoints.
- 3.2 Establish one-way traffic flow in each direction where possible.
- 3.3 Deploy decals and signage to orient movement between properties and encourage physical distancing.

#### Additional Considerations

- 3.4 Evaluate opportunities to install technology that allows for touchless transition at connections between properties.

#### **4. PINCH POINTS**

The configuration of a number of properties results in several areas of the PATH that are prone to congestion. The following best practices are recommended to maximize physical distancing.

##### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Deploy stanchions, signage and decals to designate direction of movement and reminders to maximize ability to physical distance by keeping right and not passing.
- 4.2 Where possible, deploy stanchions to create an open space between lanes of pedestrian traffic moving in opposite directions.

#### **5. GRADE CHANGES**

There are a number of grade changes within the PATH. The following best practices are in line with recommendations for grade changes in common areas.

##### **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Establish protocols for stair and escalator use:
  - 5.1.1 Keep right
  - 5.1.2 No passing
  - 5.1.2 Three stairs between individuals
- 5.2 Where possible, designate common area stairs as UP or DOWN only.
- 5.3 Provide signage with stair/escalator key messages to communicate new protocols.
- 5.4 Provide queuing areas with adequate space for physical distancing for high-traffic stairs and escalators.

#### **6. TRANSIT STATIONS AND ACCESS POINTS**

Direct access connections to transit stations are located in a number of Financial District properties. These access points are also primary points of entry into the PATH and experience high volumes of pedestrian traffic.

##### **Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Financial District Security Group will communicate ongoing limited hours of operation of the PATH with transit partners as appropriate (TTC, Metrolinx).
- 6.2 The Financial District Security Group will engage the Financial District BIA and transit partners on plans for extending access to transit stations via the PATH well in advance of changes.
- 6.3 Ensure PATH access from transit stations is fully communicated to all levels of transit staff at stations.

## FOOD COURTS

Separate from the PATH and common area amenities, food courts require special consideration. While all food courts operate with the purpose of providing meal and break options to area workers, the need to achieve patron volume for food court tenants must be balanced with the ability to provide safe access to these areas.

Physical distancing protocols will likely result in a reduced usage of food courts if patrons are faced with large crowds or unclear protocols, so the focus should be on enhanced line queuing areas. Even if seating is unavailable due to physical distancing restrictions, patrons will visit the food court for take away.

### 1. GENERAL

Similar to other common area amenities, several basic best practices apply in food courts.

#### Recommendations

- 1.1 Provide enhanced cleaning and disinfection.
- 1.2 Deploy signage with key messages related to physical distancing and personal hygiene.
- 1.3 Provide enhanced queuing area for both ordering and pick up with appropriate physical distance markings.
- 1.4 Permanently deploy specialized waste disposal receptacles and signage for used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

### 2. LANDLORD AND FOOD COURT TENANT COMMUNICATION

Landlords must work closely with food court tenants to ensure public health guidelines are followed, as well as to assign responsibility for implementing best practices.

#### Recommendations

- 2.1 Work with tenants to reduce crowding and ensure physical distancing while queuing and waiting for orders.
- 2.2 Install plexiglass barriers between workers and patrons at points of sale.
- 2.3 Eliminate the use of reusable items such as trays, dinnerware and flatware.
- 2.4 Provide clear, frequent communication to food court tenants regarding general plans for office tenants return to work, with a focus on building occupancy level and worker scheduling (e.g., adjustments to office hours, working on weekends).

#### Additional Considerations

- 2.4 Evaluate marketing programs to assist struggling food court tenants.
- 2.5 Evaluate implementation of property-based pick-up and delivery services.

### 3. QUEUING

As with other common area amenities, queuing areas will need to be added or expanded to allow for adequate physical distancing. Queuing should be evaluated in tandem with seating changes.

#### Recommendations

- 3.1 Provide queuing lines with adequate space for physical distancing for all food court tenants.
- 3.2 Ensure queues do not impede pedestrian flow through the food court or obstruct service halls, washrooms, or other access points.

#### **4. SEATING**

The varying configurations and seating in individual property food courts will dictate the ability to adjust seating. However, it is universally accepted that seating must be adjusted to allow for physical distancing protocols.

##### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Remove furniture to reduce seating capacity or designate physical distance parameters by using temporary measures such as table decals to close off seats and maintain physical distancing.
- 4.2 Where possible, remove seating nearest to food court tenants and in pedestrian travel areas to allow for adequate queuing space and unimpeded flow through the area.

##### **Additional Considerations**

- 4.3 Where space allows for adequate physical distancing in common areas outside food courts, consider relocating table seating to allow for additional places for workers to enjoy meals away from the office.



## TENANTS – OFFICE

Return to work operations will be necessarily driven by plans implemented by office tenants. Landlords should provide guidance to these tenants to allow for a manageable ramp-up of operations while remaining flexible to meet the demands of tenant operations and balancing public health concerns.

**Rather than waiting for tenants to provide finalized return to work plans, landlords should proactively communicate recommendations for best practices and clearly define roles and responsibilities early.** Regular and clear communication will be key to ensuring a high level of comfort for tenants and returning workers.

### 1. GENERAL

While different businesses will likely have different return to work plans, the landlord should communicate the following recommendations to tenants. Feedback from tenants should be incorporated into landlord return to work operations.

- 1.1 Ensure tenants have a clear policy to prohibit sick workers from entering the premises and a clear communications plan in place to address positive cases.
- 1.2 Encourage tenants to adopt a phased-in approach to return to work (see Section 3 – Schedules, Breaks and Late Policies).
- 1.3 Clearly determine roles and responsibilities for protocols related to sick employees, cleaning services, security, health screenings, and other operations which may be adjusted as part of return to work plans. NOTE: All landlords interviewed indicated they would not be undertaking temperature screening of individuals entering properties unless required by regulatory authorities.
- 1.4 Evaluate and communicate cleaning offerings for tenant space and redefine cleaning standards included within lease parameters versus additional services at tenant expense.
- 1.5 In the instance that a tenant undertakes health screenings for access to their leased space on their own initiative, establish clear protocols for access for building staff and contracted staff (e.g., janitorial, security, deliveries, etc.).
- 1.6 Develop a Return to Work package for tenants outlining changes in landlord services, property operations, and social protocols.
- 1.7 Implement a clear and frequent communications plan to keep tenants abreast of changes to regulations, operations, social protocols, etc. through the return to work phase.

### 2. DENSITY AND ORIENTATION OF SPACE AND TRAFFIC FLOWS

Varying office configurations based on nature of work will most likely be reviewed by tenants internally with an eye to ensuring physical distance protocols are reasonably implemented. While unlikely, landlords and tenants should be prepared to react if public health agencies mandate a maximum density requirement for commercial space.

#### Recommendations

- 2.1 Share best practices in reconfiguring workspaces with tenants (e.g., reconfiguring desks to allow extra space, installing barriers in cubicle or open office environments).
- 2.2 Encourage tenants to develop protocols for movement within tenant spaces (e.g., establish IN and OUT doors, circulation of pedestrian flow in clockwise pattern, protocols for entering and leaving meeting spaces, limiting in-person meetings, etc.).

### **3. SCHEDULES, BREAKS AND LATE POLICIES**

High density commercial office towers will struggle to operate with physical distancing restrictions under conventional, pre-COVID-19 operating hours. Landlords should encourage tenants to review their internal operations to adopt the following recommendations where feasible.

#### **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Phase in return of workers based on essential tasks.
- 3.2 Adjust hours of returning workers to reduce rush hour impact on building operations (e.g., stagger starting times over a three- to four-hour period vs. traditional 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. arrival time). Encourage tenants to review late policies to allow for tardiness due to potential transit and elevator capacity restrictions.
- 3.3 Adjust schedule of returning workers to spread building occupancy load (e.g., schedule office vs. remote work in shifting schedules, consider evening and weekend work hours where possible).
- 3.4 Adjust breaks and mealtimes to reduce congestion in tenant break rooms, elevators, PATH, food courts and common areas.

#### **Additional Considerations**

- 3.5 Consider opportunities to incentivize or provide tenant appreciation for tenant participation in modified work schedules.

### **4. SHARED WORKSTATIONS AND MEETING SPACES**

A number of tenants have implemented flexible space and shared workstation configurations. Landlords should work with tenants to assist them in developing protocols to minimize risk of worker infection while still enabling tenants to use space.

#### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Tenants should review options to assign traditionally shared workspaces to specific workers.
- 4.2 Tenants should implement cleaning protocols for workspaces which continue to be shared spaces. Encourage creative ideas such as temporary workspace placemats.

### **5. TENANT IMPROVEMENTS**

A large number of tenants may wish to reconfigure space based on physical distancing protocols. Landlords should clearly communicate about the responsibility, restrictions and implementation of tenant improvements.

#### **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Establish and communicate protocols for contractors entering landlord and tenant premises.

## TENANTS – RETAIL AND FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS

Many retailers such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and liquor stores have implemented physical distancing and queuing measures both inside and outside of their locations. Replication of these measures should occur in properties and clear communication is needed to clarify roles and responsibilities between landlord and tenant. **Generally, the tenant will be responsible for physical distancing measures inside their space.**

### Recommendations

- 1.1 Tenants should limit the number of shoppers inside retail stores based on unit square footage.
- 1.2 Tenants are responsible for physical distancing measures within their unit.
- 1.3 Merchandise displays and checkout counters should be reorganized to maximize physical distancing ability.
- 1.4 Plexiglass barriers should be installed at checkout locations.
- 1.5 Deploy floor decals to direct the flow of movement throughout the store. While these should traditionally be the responsibility of the tenant, landlords should provide a generic supply of physical distancing floor decals for less sophisticated tenants.
- 1.6 Landlords should establish queuing line protocols and place appropriate key message signage outside of retail stores to maintain 2 metre physical distancing.
- 1.7 Full service restaurants will likely have specific regulatory physical distancing requirements. Landlords should acquaint themselves to monitor compliance.

## PROPERTY OPERATIONS

Discussions with landlords during the information gathering phase highlighted several key areas of property operations for consideration. Recommendations below are necessarily broad to account for the varying operations of individual properties and do not include technical specifications. Landlords should use industry best practices as applicable.

### 1. LANDLORD WORKERS

For the purposes of this section, landlord workers have been defined in the Glossary, and include direct employees and contracted services (e.g., security and cleaning). Landlords are encouraged to develop a plan to ensure preparedness to implement health screenings for workers if required.

### Recommendations

- 1.1 Require public-facing landlord workers to wear masks.
- 1.2 Provide landlord workers with adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) based on job description.
- 1.3 Provide hand sanitizer and/or hygiene stations in appropriate areas.
- 1.4 Assess and modify workspaces, including breakrooms, locker rooms, storage areas, and other back of house operations, to allow for adequate physical distancing.
- 1.5 Implement enhanced cleaning of workspaces and back of house operations.
- 1.6 Prepare plan to implement health screenings for landlord workers if required by government order or as dictated by new social protocols.
- 1.7 Clearly communicate protocols for sick workers.
- 1.8 Post signage to ensure communication of appropriate protocols related to physical distancing and personal hygiene.
- 1.9 Adjust worker schedules to adapt to new building operating times based on tenant schedules.

## **2. SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT**

Based on conversations, it is clear landlords have already implemented these recommendations. We have included them for consistency.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.1 Maintain an adequate supply of cleaning materials and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- 2.2 Implement process for cleaning and disinfection of worker equipment.
- 2.3 Where possible, minimize use of shared equipment and establish protocols for disinfection between uses.

## **3. CLEANING AND DISINFECTION**

Cleaning and disinfection of properties is a top-of-mind concern for tenants and workers. Landlords should anticipate that enhanced cleaning protocols will be the new normal.

### **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Continue enhanced cleaning protocols.
- 3.2 Deploy cleaning staff with a view to increasing worker comfort (e.g., place cleaners at doors and elevators during peak hours).
- 3.3 Evaluate changing traffic patterns and occupancy and adjust cleaning schedules as required.

### **Additional Considerations**

- 3.4 Evaluate additional cleaning technology, such as UV technology.
- 3.5 Implement antimicrobial films and mats for high-traffic locations.

## **4. HVAC AND WATER SYSTEMS**

Landlords have received numerous inquiries from tenants related to operation of HVAC and water systems and their ability to minimize risk of infection. Scientific research to date is not definitive on the effectiveness of implementing additional technologies in these areas to reduce risks related to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Regular handwashing, physical distancing and maintaining good respiratory hygiene are the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infection.

### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Increase air ventilation rates in buildings and garages as able.
- 4.2 Clearly communicate that HVAC and water systems meet applicable guidelines.

### **Additional Considerations**

- 4.3 Monitor industry best practices for filtration, humidity and ventilation.
- 4.4 Consider deployment of additional technology to enhance tenant comfort with air and water systems (sensors, air quality monitors, etc.).
- 4.5 Consider providing third-party certification for HVAC and water systems to enhance tenant comfort.

## **5. GOODS MOVEMENT / LOADING DOCK FACILITIES / BUILDING OPERATED COURIER AND PICK-UP SERVICES**

The delivery of goods is an essential part of property operations and measures should be in place to maintain efficient distribution of goods to tenants, while ensuring the safety of workers and delivery persons. Due to the varying approach to goods movement within individual properties, the recommendations below are intended as broad guidelines to be adapted to existing property operations.

### **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Implement 24-hour delivery schedules to spread out deliveries while enabling adequate physical distancing.
- 5.2 Require loading dock workers and delivery personnel to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- 5.3 Require delivery personnel to check in at security/concierge/loading dock facilities prior to accessing upper levels.
- 5.4 Schedule tenant access to pick-up facilities in advance to maximize ability to maintain physical distancing protocols.
- 5.5 Implement contactless delivery for building-operated courier services.
- 5.6 Deploy signage with physical distancing and personal hygiene messages at loading docks and pick-up facilities.
- 5.7 Deploy hand sanitizers at loading docks and pick-up facilities.
- 5.8 Deploy specialized waste disposal receptacles for used PPE and appropriate signage with key messages at loading docks and pick-up facilities.

### **Additional Considerations**

- 5.9 Consider implementation of internal courier operations and pick-up locations to reduce access requirements above common areas.

## **6. PROTOCOL FOR POSITIVE CASES**

Landlords have already implemented protocols for positive cases and are generally similar in terms of communication, isolation and evacuation, and cleaning and disinfection. Recommendations are focused on ensuring information is communicated clearly to build trust with tenants and workers.

### **Recommendations**

- 6.1 Clearly communicate protocols for tenants to report positive cases to landlords.
- 6.2 Clearly communicate property protocols for disinfection to tenants.

## **7. FIRE DRILLS**

Fire drills are an area of concern because they are required by government regulations and also lead to significant crowding. Additional discussion with authorities is warranted to see if fire drills can be delayed while COVID-19 restrictions are in place.

### **Recommendations**

- 7.1 Determine ability to delay evacuation drills during peak infection periods.
- 7.2 Evaluate protocols for assembly areas and provide recommendations for modified operations to tenants.
- 7.3 Ensure appropriate landlord and tenant staff are fully trained on new evacuation drill procedures and a sufficient number of tenant fire wardens are available to accommodate flexible worker schedules.

## **8. CONTRACTORS**

Contractor access to properties should be managed similarly to access for visitors and delivery personnel.

### **Recommendations**

- 8.1 Require contractors to check in at appropriate location prior to entering upper levels.
- 8.2 Require contractors to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

## **9. PARKING**

A number of recommendations regarding public-facing operations of parking garages are addressed in the Common Areas section of the recommendations. Additional recommendations should be implemented to ensure parking access is available for property workers and visitors.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.1 Evaluate opportunities to maximize parking space in facilities to accommodate anticipated increased demand.
- 9.2 Install additional bicycle parking on property to accommodate anticipated increased demand.
- 9.3 Implement recommendations from Common Areas Section 11. Executive Facilities and Wellness Centres for cyclist shower facilities.

## **10. TENANT APPRECIATION**

Tenant appreciation programs will be necessarily different in the age of physical distancing. Landlords should give thought to modification to these programs to adapt them to newly developed social protocols.

### **Recommendations**

- 10.1 Defer tenant appreciation events that do not meet physical distancing standards until they are safe to resume.
- 10.2 Develop alternative tenant appreciation programs.

## **11. LEASING**

Leasing operations will continue, and physical distancing protocols should be maintained. Landlords are encouraged to review procedures and implement ways to accommodate new protocols.

### **Recommendation**

- 11.1 Maintain physical distancing protocols during leasing tours.
- 11.2 Highlight landlord adaptation of operations to meet new protocols.

### **Additional Considerations**

- 11.2 Consider implementation of virtual leasing tours.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Return to work will likely occur in phases as government restrictions are gradually lifted. Communications with tenants, workers and the general public will be key to ensure return to work operations are seamless and effective. It is critical that landlords consider the following best practices in developing communications:

- Be credible. Make sure you are accurate and honest.
- Express empathy. People need to know their leaders care.
- Promote action. Giving people something specific to do restores a sense of control.

### 1. KEY MESSAGES

To encourage adoption of new social protocols, the following key messages should be emphasized at all levels of communications.

#### Recommendations

- 1.1 Incorporate key messages supporting primary objectives of ensuring appropriate physical distance is maintained and encouraging personal hygiene and etiquette:
  - Maintain 2 metres of physical distance
  - Wash your hands frequently
  - Do not touch your face
  - Use good respiratory etiquette (cover your mouth)
  - Safely dispose of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- 1.2 Ensure key messages are supported by landlord workers setting the standard of new behaviour.

### 2. TENANT COMMUNICATIONS

Landlords already have practices in place to ensure consistent and steady communication with tenants. Using established channels and increasing the frequency of communication will be necessary as a phased-in return to work occurs.

#### Recommendations

- 2.1 Utilize surveys or other methods to gain information about tenants' return to work plans, concerns related to operations in common areas or leased space, plans to implement worker health screenings, etc.
- 2.2 Distribute a Return to Work package to tenants outlining key messages, changes to operational protocols, etc.
- 2.3 Implement weekly communications with tenants to advise of building occupancy levels, encourage social protocols, and monitor tenant concerns.
- 2.4 Incorporate communications promoting retail and food court tenants to assist struggling businesses.

#### Additional Considerations

- 2.5 Develop a protocol for contactless tenant meetings.

### 3. COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

It is critical that key messages are universally distributed to tenants, workers and the general public through available communications channels.

#### Recommendations

- 3.1 Utilize tenant and worker targeted apps, portals and intranet systems.
- 3.2 Utilize physical signage (standing signs, digital signs, decals) in common areas and transition points.
- 3.3 Emphasize key messages on social media.
- 3.4 Utilize elevator screens.

## NEXT STEPS

This document will be circulated for review to landlords that participated in the information gathering process. Follow up interviews with these landlords will be scheduled and the Financial District BIA will continue to monitor government regulations and best practices.

The Financial District BIA will engage TTC and GO Transit to understand their return to work plans.

This report will be updated as new information becomes available.



# About Us



The Toronto Financial District Business Improvement Area (BIA) represents Toronto's premier business centre, an area that includes Union Station, the PATH underground walkway and Canada's five major banks and most prominent firms. Funding is received through a special levy on commercial real estate within its jurisdiction.

TorontoFinancialDistrict.com  
@MyTOFD



ACCESS TO THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT



ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS



COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND INVESTMENT

***Your district is our business***