

# Emergency Coronavirus Summit

## Overview

On March 4, 2020 BOMA Canada hosted an Emergency Coronavirus Summit to learn about and discuss best practices for BOMA members in the face of Coronavirus (COVID-19). At least 130 members attended in person, online and by teleconference in what may have been the largest-ever BOMA Canada national event outside of [www.bomex.ca](http://www.bomex.ca).

Speakers included Susan Bazak, who is well known in our industry as a leader in emergency preparedness; Dr. Talia Varley and Dr. Jia Hu of the Cleveland Clinic Canada; and sponsor Randy Burke from DCS Global Enterprise. Kevin Montgomery of Public Services and Procurement Canada spoke briefly about how the government views the incident (as a major BOMA tenant) and commended BOMA Canada on our *Pandemic Guide* (see below). We are also grateful to Randal Froebelius of MaRS and BOMA International for hosting us.

Discussion, including a very active Q&A session, focused on the importance of public perception and understanding risks to human health caused by COVID-19 as currently understood in Canada. *BOMA members are urged to consult with relevant authorities and not to take the content discussed at this session, in this document or in any other BOMA product (including the Pandemic Guide), event etc. as medical/public health advice applicable in any set of circumstances.*

## Outcomes and Next Steps

Those present coalesced around a proposal from Bob Riddell, Chair of the BOMA Toronto Security and Risk Management Advisory Council and Director, Security and Life Safety at Ivanhoé Cambridge, to establish a smaller working group tasked with harnessing best practices and driving a coordinated industry response where possible. **BOMA Canada invites volunteers to join this small group, and specifically seeks diverse representation in terms of geography, member type, asset class, etc.** Please email [llarsen@bomacanada.ca](mailto:llarsen@bomacanada.ca) immediately if you would like to participate, and please understand that we aim to keep this project to a small enough size that it can truly be effective as a working group. That said, the working group will report back to the broader community, including those who joined the March 4, 2020 session. We will also continue to post relevant information on our social media channels and in our eblasts.

## Background

- COVID-19 spreads more efficiently than seasonal flu.
- Canada still has very low rates of infection.
- Reduce the burden on health services by emphasizing inoculation for the regular flu (so it doesn't compound effects of COVID-19)
- Rates of contagion are slowing in China, but this could be thanks to their very aggressive containment tactics. It is unlikely that these can be replicated in other regions.

- Pandemics typically occur in waves – it is possible that rates will slow only to pick back up again in a few months. Keep being proactive.

## BOMA Resources to support building owners and managers

- [BOMA Canada Pandemic Guide](#): Updated annually and provides a great starting point for the discussion.<sup>1</sup>
- BOMA Canada has prepared a series of posters & tenant communication panels (e.g. for building lobbies) on personal hygiene which can be ordered from PosterOne at <https://www.posterone.com/posterone/account/login?groupseckey=JPdjvylR3afwg7a9>
- BOMA Canada-DCS Global whitepaper: Currently in development, this document will assist building owners and managers with operationalizing best practices when faced with a crisis.
- The Bazak Consulting PowerPoint presented at the March 4, 2020 BOMA Canada meeting (distributed with this document).
- Full video/audio of the March 4, 2020 BOMA Canada Emergency Coronavirus Summit (English only): <https://vimeo.com/396455168>

## Key Takeaways

- Perception is reality – be active and visible, show you are acting to minimize risks.
- Public Health Authorities are your key contact. Contact them if anything happens in your building or for any advice whatsoever. They are experts who can help implement protocols and can help analyze the path of transmission to reduce risks to others.
- Wearing masks is generally unwarranted for healthy individuals and overuse may have an impact on availability of masks for health professionals.
- The best line of defense is hourly hand washing and sanitizing with a minimum of 60% alcohol. Make supplies readily available. Ensure tap water is warm. Antibacterial soap will help for bacterial challenges, but not for a virus like coronavirus. Post “how to wash your hands” messages by sinks.

## Things you can do right now

- Plan and implement additional cleaning protocols for more frequent services. Visible cleaning is good, shows you are being proactive (cleaning elevator buttons, door handles, etc.)
- Update your communications protocol to communicate best hygiene practices as well as taking steps should someone be infected.
- For your own firm, conduct preparedness tests, e.g. everyone/many people work from home on one day. Implement lessons learned from the test.
- Keep work surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) clean & hygienic. Wipe with disinfectant regularly.
- Promote regular and thorough hand-washing (employees, contractors and customers).
- Consider impacts of COVID-19 on the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Available for free in English, French and Simplified Chinese at [www.bomacanada.ca/resources/](http://www.bomacanada.ca/resources/) – please check your spam and/or email [info@bomacanada.ca](mailto:info@bomacanada.ca) if you have downloading issues.

- Business continuity: How to react if there is a confirmed case in your building.
- Organizational continuity: Align your internal policies with best practice recommendations to ensure you are morally and legally protected.
- Commercial leases: Based on your lease, what can you require from tenants if there is a health emergency?
- Supply chain: Look at your supply chain and plan what you might need (e.g. additional sanitizer) in 1 month, 2 months.
- Severe pandemic: Though extremely remote, legislation may enable authorities to shut down your building. Engage with your legal department proactively.
- Intolerance: If there is an incident of intolerance or racism (e.g. harassment at a Chinese restaurant/tenant), be ready with messages of tolerance and support. Ensure security personnel and staff have been trained to react appropriately to individuals exhibiting harassing or intolerant behaviour towards someone due to ethnicity and perceived increased risk.
- As summer arrives, consider plans for tenant appreciation events including if they will be attended, if hosting them will send confusing messages. Consider ways to replace the appreciation should you decide to forgo them.

## Final Thoughts

- There is no competition when it comes to health and safety.
- A coordinated, united response to coronavirus through BOMA Canada and our partners will help us all.
- The smaller BOMA Canada working group will convene shortly (see above) and lead work going forward.
- We will be in touch as events warrant, and please reach out to us for any reason whatsoever.

## Addendum: Public Resources

- **Bill Gates, Responding to COVID-19: A once in a century pandemic?** *Journal of New England Medicine*, February 28, 2020. Retrieved March 5, 2020 from: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2003762>
- **BOMA Canada: 2019 Guide to Pandemic Planning** <http://bomacanada.ca/pandemic-2019/>
- **Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Planning Guidance for the Health Sector**, 2018: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/flu-influenza/canadian-pandemic-influenza-preparedness-planning-guidance-health-sector.html>
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, *MMWR Weekly*, June 13, 2003. Update: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Toronto, Canada, 2003: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5223a4.htm>
- **Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy**, University of Minnesota, COVID-19 resource center: <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19>
- **Federal/Provincial/Territorial Public Health Response Plan for Biological Events**, 2018, Pan-Canadian Public Health Network: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/emergency-preparedness/public-health-response-plan-biological-events/pub1-eng.pdf>

- **Government of Canada, Public Health, COVID-19 for Health Professionals.** This website provides information on spectrum of illness, transmission, diagnostics, infection prevention and control, and treatment: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals.html>
- **Johns Hopkins University, Center for Systems Science & Engineering, Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases dashboard:**  
<https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>
- **North American Plan for Animal and Pandemic Influenza, 2012:**  
<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsracs/pblctns/nml-pndmc-nflnz/nml-pndmc-nflnz-eng.pdf>
- **Pandemic Planning Posters, BOMA Canada and PosterOne:**  
[http://www.posterone.com/pandemicposters/BOMA\\_OrderForm\\_EN.pdf](http://www.posterone.com/pandemicposters/BOMA_OrderForm_EN.pdf)
- **World Health Organization, Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19, February 27, 2020:**  
<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>