

## Memorandum

**Date:** June 17, 2021

**From:** Alan Veerman  
Chief Operations Officer

**To:** All Vector Institute Researchers and Staff

**RE:** COVID-19 Gradual Re-opening – Summer 2021

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Following recent reports that Ontario may soon be ready to move into Step 2 of its *Roadmap to Reopen*, Toronto Western Hospital has closed its COVID-19 unit as infection numbers continue to decline, and Toronto General Hospital reported that they have no COVID-19 patients in their ICU for the first time in 14-months, the Vector Institute is preparing to re-open its offices under limited conditions.

Based on current projections, it is anticipated that the earliest possible day on which this re-opening may go into effect is July 12, 2021.

Staff and researchers may request access based on either the need to be onsite for business or health & safety reasons; a significant loss of productivity in a work-from-home arrangement; or difficulty with work-from-home arrangements, for example due to loneliness or mental distress.

Those wishing to return to the office for any of the above reasons are welcome to submit an access request by contacting their direct supervisor by Friday June 25, 2021 for access potentially beginning on Monday July 12, 2021, which is a date subject to provincial health regulations that will be confirmed prior to the office re-opening.

Requests should detail the number of days per week as well as the preferred day(s), if applicable, on which the individual would like to be in the office.

Supervisors will share this information with Vector's Office Services Manager, who will review requests with the Business Continuity Group. That group will make recommendations on final decisions that take into consideration available workstations, physical capacity restrictions, and social distancing requirements.

Those who do not request access will continue under work-from-home arrangements at this time.

Vector will continue to monitor advice from public health officials, government orders, and directives from the property management teams at the MaRS Centre and 700 University Ave. Should this plan change, additional communications will be shared with the community.

Vector's updated re-opening plan is attached, which includes questions and answers to common inquiries.

Attachment: COVID-19 Re-opening Plan (Summer 2021), June 14, 2021

## COVID-19 Re-opening Plan Summer 2021

Last updated June 14, 2021

The Vector Institute is committed to taking a thoughtful and transparent approach as we prepare to re-open the Vector Institute offices at 661 University Avenue in the MaRS Centre, West Tower, and on the 17th floor of 700 University Avenue.

The intent of this document is to summarize current access plans, which will continue to evolve over time and change based on guidance provided by government orders, public health authorities, the MaRS Centre and Triovest property management teams, and the University of Toronto (Vector's most closely-affiliated university).

Additional resources and instructions will be provided as they become available. The most current version of this document will also be posted on Vector's COVID-19 webpage at:

<https://vectorinstitute.ai/covid-19-updates/>

### Vector Institute Plan (Last updated June 14, 2021)

Those staff members and researchers wishing to return to the office for business or health & safety reasons; a significant loss of productivity in a work-from-home arrangement; or difficulty with work-from-home arrangements, for example due to loneliness or mental distress, are welcome to submit an access request by contacting their direct supervisor by Friday June 25, 2021 for access potentially beginning on Monday July 12, 2021, which is a date subject to provincial health regulations that will be confirmed prior to the office re-opening.

Requests should detail the number of days per week as well as the preferred day(s), if applicable, on which the individual would like to be in the office.

To allow for physical distancing and to promote safety and hygiene in the office, the number of desks available in both Vector offices has been reduced by approximately 50 per cent.

Arrangements have been made to facilitate access to computing resources for both onsite researchers and for those connecting remotely.

Those users not wishing to use a desk at Vector may only gain physical access to the office if so approved in advance of the visit by the Office Services Manager.

Staff and researchers who do not wish to return to the office at this time will continue under work-from-home arrangements at this time.

The Vector Institute remains closed to all non-access card holders and external visitors during this time.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution and Reduced Restrictions**

**Q: *Do I have to follow the same in-office restrictions if I have already received either one or two vaccine doses?***

A: Yes. The federal government has not yet provided guidance on whether partially- or fully-vaccinated individuals in Canada can follow reduced restrictions.

Vector will continue to enforce all masking, distancing, and hand hygiene rules for all users in its offices until new guidelines and directives have been issued by public health authorities and confirmed for implementation by our property management guidelines at the MaRS Centre and 700 University Ave.

**Q: *When will Vector begin to reduce public health restrictions in its offices?***

A: Vector expects to receive regular updates to the guidelines that are made available from government orders, public health authorities, the MaRS Centre and Triovest property management teams, and the University of Toronto.

The Vector Institute does not plan to reduce restrictions until both allowed to do so by public health authorities and recommended to do so by property management teams.

This condition is expected to exist until such time as all COVID-19 public health restrictions have been lifted in Ontario and Toronto.

**Q: *Will Vector in-person events resume during this initial access period?***

A: As described in the Ontario Government's *Roadmap to Reopen*, large public gatherings such as concerts and sporting events will continue to be restricted.

In the absence of direction to the contrary from public health authorities, the MaRS Centre, and Triovest, Vector events will continue to be delivered virtually until further notice.

**Q. *What are Vector's plans for flexible work arrangements and work-from-home arrangements following the pandemic?***

Vector will plan to revert to a flexible work culture that was in place prior to the pandemic as various restrictions imposed by COVID-19 are lifted.

Any work-from-home arrangement shall be done in agreement with your immediate Supervisor and/or Workstream leader.

These arrangements are discretionary and are based on considerations of business needs and continuity, individual circumstance, and team dynamics, as well as the availability of work space within the Vector Institute's offices.

## **Access**

### ***Q: Will guests, visitors, or other non-access card holders be granted access to the Vector Institute's offices?***

A: In accordance with property management guidelines, only authorized access card holders may enter the MaRS Centre and 700 University Ave.

Although the MaRS Centre has setup access requirements for external guests and visitors, the Vector Institute is not generally prepared to accommodate these requirements at this time.

Meetings with external visitors or guests should be conducted electronically or take place in-person outside of Vector's offices, provided that the participants can satisfy public health guidelines and maintain social distancing.

This condition is expected to exist until such time as all COVID-19 public health restrictions have been lifted in Ontario and Toronto.

### ***Q: How many members of my team or research lab will be eligible to be in Vector on a given day?***

A: Density and occupancy restrictions will be based on guidance provided by government orders, public health authorities, and property management teams.

Generally, you should expect that not all members of a professional staff team or lab group will be eligible for access at any given time and that large group meetings (e.g., meetings of four\* individuals or more) should be conducted electronically or take place in-person outside of the MaRS building provided that the participants can satisfy public health guidelines and maintain social distancing.

\*The maximum number of individuals permitted to occupy one multi-purpose room simultaneously is four, but multiple MPRs combined may be able to accommodate a larger meeting.

### ***Q: Am I required to wear a face mask in Vector?***

A: Vector and its property management partners will observe and enforce all public health recommendations on social distancing (e.g., remaining six feet apart at all times and wearing a mask if social distancing is not possible). Therefore, one should wear a face mask when travelling to and moving around the Vector office and common areas of the MaRS Centre and 700 University Ave.

However, one need not wear a mask if one is working alone, able to satisfy public health guidelines, and maintain physical distancing; or if one is exempt from wearing a mask under Toronto by-law 541-2020:

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-orders-directives-by-laws/>

**Q: Will Vector provide face masks?**

A: All personnel are encouraged to acquire and wear their own face masks for reasons of comfort, fit, and preference.

Vector has provided a supply of face masks intended to accommodate personnel who forget their mask, have a mask damaged while at Vector, or may not yet have been able to acquire their own.

**Q: If I do not request regular access to Vector initially, will I be able to enter the Vector Institute's offices for the purposes of picking up equipment and/or personal belongings for at home use?**

A: Staff and Vector Researchers can contact the Office Services team to coordinate a time to enter Vector to pick up personal belongings, business resources, or assigned equipment.

Vector equipment can be loaned to professional staff under certain conditions. Staff wishing to make use of Vector-owned equipment as part of their work-from-home arrangements should contact the Office Services team at [services@vectorinstitute.ai](mailto:services@vectorinstitute.ai)

**Q: Will access to Vector continue to be allowed on evenings and weekends?**

A: If your request for access to the Vector Institute during this time is approved, your card will allow you to enter the office for the full 24 hours on the day(s) you have requested. Policies in respect of physical distancing and mask use are in effect at all times, including those times when professional staff are not onsite in the office.

## Physical Space

**Q: What changes can I expect regarding the layout and use of the Vector space?**

A: The Vector Institute has considered several approaches and options and has made decisions intended to preserve the health and safety of all members of the Vector community.

Decisions considered guidance from public health authorities and property management, evaluation of their both real and perceived practicality, cost of implementation, impact to Vector culture, and projected overall effectiveness.

Conditions of access will evolve over time, but the following changes are being enacted in the Vector offices:

- Upon arrival in MaRS and 700 University Ave., all access card holders will be asked to wash their hands before entering the Vector Institute and to use an alcohol-based sanitizer upon entering the suite.
  - Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the MaRS Centre, 700 University Ave., and Vector offices.
- Public health recommendations on social distancing (e.g., remaining six feet apart at all times and wearing a mask if social distancing is not possible) will be observed and enforced.
- In respecting social distancing guidelines, access to meeting rooms will be restricted to the following:
  - Huddle rooms and unassigned private offices – one user at a time; and
  - Hilbert, Banach, Euclidean, or Sobolev spaces – four users at a time, ensuring social distancing requirements are respected.
- All meeting room bookings must be arranged ahead of time, via direct online calendar booking or by contacting [services@vectorinstitute.ai](mailto:services@vectorinstitute.ai). Room booking panels will not be available for walk-up booking use.
- Private offices will be restricted for use by the assigned occupant only unless the occupant is under a work-from-home arrangement.
- VOIP phones will be temporarily removed from huddle rooms.
- Microwaves and refrigerators in both kitchens will remain available with users being required to wipe down surfaces before and after use.
- Coffee and tea services will be temporarily suspended.
- Access to shared dishes and the dishwasher will be temporarily suspended.
- Workstation availability will be staggered such that social distancing measures can be respected (i.e., desks that are directly adjacent to one another will be off-limits).
- Workstation shuffles and the availability of floating or shared workstations will be temporarily suspended.
- Desks will be assigned directly to those individuals who have requested and have been subsequently approved to return to the Vector space.

- The amount of reception/lounge furniture available for use will be reduced.
- All users of the space will be required to wipe down public surfaces throughout the day with alcohol-based disinfecting wipes. This requirement includes wiping down your workstation upon arrival into the office and prior to your departure, as well as wiping down any shared spaces immediately following use including desks and doorknobs, meeting rooms, printers, keyboards, and the kitchen counter.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available in all high traffic areas including printer and meeting rooms.
- Additional and more frequent cleaning and janitorial services will be provided.
- If necessary, fixed schedules for access may be introduced to help ensure social distancing.

***Q: Will a member of the Office Services Team be on site at all times for assistance and questions regarding the physical space?***

A: A member of the Office Services Team will, pending scheduling conflicts and regular breaks, will be available at the Vector MaRS front desk Monday-Friday during the day (approximately 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.).

Should a member of the Office Services Team not be immediately available for support, you can contact them on Slack (@Vanessa Dunne, @Monika Szota, and/or @Keilly Nazas-Montenegro) or speak with another member of the professional staff.

## **Health**

***Q: If I am feeling unwell, will I be eligible to enter the Vector space?***

A: No. If you are feeling unwell in any way, regardless of the severity of your symptoms or whether or not your symptoms are recognized symptoms of COVID-19, you should not enter either the Vector Institute offices or the larger buildings and should comply with all guidance set by public health authorities.

***Q: If I have come into contact with someone who has a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19, am I required to notify Vector and/or self-isolate for a period of two weeks?***

A: Yes. Should you come into contact with someone with a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19, please notify your direct supervisor (who will inform Vector Human Resources) and suspend visitation to the Vector suite immediately.

The duration of your suspension will be based on guidance from public health authorities.

Should you test negative for COVID-19 following the contact, you are not displaying symptoms of the virus, and exposure to the individual with the presumptive or confirmed case has not continued, you may be eligible to return to Vector earlier than the recommended public health quarantine period.

***Q: Am I required to notify Vector and/or stay home for a two-week period if I have a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19?***

A: Yes. Should you be diagnosed with a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19, please notify your direct supervisor and suspend visitation to Vector's offices immediately.

In accordance with public health guidelines, if diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19 you should self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days. These 10 days should be counted from the onset of symptoms for a symptomatic case, or from the collection date of a positive specimen for an asymptomatic case.

***Q: Will I be notified in the event that someone in the Vector space has a confirmed or presumptive case of COVID-19?***

A: Yes, a general notice will be shared with all individuals with active access cards to the Vector Institute.

The privacy of the individual will be maintained to the extent that is possible while ensuring we are taking the most appropriate steps to preserve the health and safety of others (e.g., those who work most closely with the individual may be provided additional communication including the dates and times of the individual's recent access).

***Q: Will the office be closed in the event that a user has a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19?***

A: The Vector Institute will work closely with its property management partners and follow all public health guidelines in respect of the different situations that may arise. Part of these guidelines may involve closing the Vector Institute for disinfecting, which may take several days to coordinate and execute.

As the Vector Institute could close at any time without significant notice, you are advised to take essential items home with you on a daily basis.

Should additional public health guidelines regarding organizational response to a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19 in a workplace be provided, Vector will comply with these recommendations.



## Events and Meetings

### **Q: *Can meetings such as reading groups or talks be held in the Vector office?***

A: Meetings can be held within the Vector space so long as they respect the above mentioned measures surrounding social distancing (i.e., all individuals must maintain a distance of six feet from one another), meeting room occupancy (i.e., no more than four users can be in a large meeting room at any one time), and access (i.e., only access card holders are permitted into the space).

## Travel and Commuting

### **Q: *When travel restrictions are lifted, will staff or researchers be eligible to travel for business purposes?***

A: Professional staff of the Vector Institute will be eligible to travel for business-critical purposes only. Approval will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Researchers should look to the guidelines of their home institutions for clarity on travel authorization and procedures e.g., the University of Toronto describes that, “International travel restrictions will likely remain in place for some time. When these restrictions are lifted, there will likely be strict quarantine requirements for those coming to our campuses from abroad, such as international students and new faculty. The University will support travelers to meet these self-isolation requirements.”

### **Q: *Will I be required to quarantine or suspend access to the Vector space following travel?***

A: The Vector Institute will not impose its own instructions separate and apart from public health guidelines regarding quarantine guidelines following travel.

### **Q: *Will professional staff be eligible for reimbursement for parking, Uber, taxi or other ride services that will limit my use of public transit in travelling to and from Vector?***

A: As an organization funded in part by the federal and provincial governments, we are unable to provide perquisites such as reimbursement for travel to and from the Vector Institute except for reasons of personal safety after hours.

All members of the Vector community are encouraged to review and adhere to the various guidelines set forth by public health officials and transit authorities to ensure a safe commute.

## Compliance and Questions

### **Q: *Who should I contact regarding questions or concerns surrounding office procedures?***

A: You may contact your direct supervisor; Alan Veerman, Chief Operations Officer ([Alan.Veerman@vectorinstitute.ai](mailto:Alan.Veerman@vectorinstitute.ai)); Vanessa Dunne, Office Services Manager ([Vanessa.Dunne@vectorinstitute.ai](mailto:Vanessa.Dunne@vectorinstitute.ai)); and/or Julie Semak, Manager, Human Resources ([Julie.Semak@vectorinstitute.ai](mailto:Julie.Semak@vectorinstitute.ai))

### **Q: *Is compliance with these new procedures and guidelines mandatory while in the Vector space?***

A: Yes. You are required to comply with all procedures and guidelines set forth in this document as a condition of access to the Vector Institute.

The primary goal of these conditions is protecting the health and safety of all members of the Vector community.

Non-compliance with any of these measures may be met with disciplinary action up to and including temporary loss of access to the Vector space, the end of your term at the Vector Institute and/or dismissal.

## Resources

Should you require remote scientific computing support please contact [ops@vectorinstitute.ai](mailto:ops@vectorinstitute.ai) or reach out to @Relu or @George on Slack.

If you have questions related to COVID-19, you can contact Telehealth Ontario, which is a free, confidential service that provides health advice and information. Call 1-866-797-0000 or visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-medical-advice-telehealth-ontario> to learn more.

Should you require resources related to your personal or mental health, please contact the Vector Institute's Employee and Family Assistance Plan (available to all staff and researchers) at [www.workhealthlife.com](http://www.workhealthlife.com) or at 1-800-238-8663. Please provide or select the company name "Victor Canada EFAP Program".

Researchers may also contact their Student Services or Human Resources department at their respective institutions for additional support programs.

Anyone in crisis is encouraged to contact the Crisis Services Canada national line at 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645 (in Quebec, call: 1-866-277-3553). If the risk is immediate, call 9-1-1.

Should you have general questions regarding COVID-19, or Vector's COVID-19 response including ongoing research projects, please visit our dedicated [public web page](#).