



Occupational
Hygiene Association
of Ontario

May 28, 2021

Colleen Geiger
Interim President & CEO
Public Health Ontario
480 University Ave, Suite 300, Toronto, ON

By Email: colleen.geiger@oahpp.ca

Dear Ms. Geiger,

OHAO is writing to you as the association for professionals in this province that work to prevent occupational diseases across all sectors of the economy. Our members are well educated in the evaluation and control of hazards, and work to develop controls that reduce risks, including biological exposures.

The mission of OHAO is:

- sponsoring professional development and training;
- promoting public and legal recognition of occupational hygiene;
- *developing partnerships with stakeholders-employers, unions, government;*
- *providing public education; and*
- *fostering communication and networking amongst members*

OHAO would like to offer this letter of support and gratitude for including an update of the science that includes aerosol transmission (Published 20 May 2021, <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/what-we-know>).

This re-enforces the efforts of many of our members, since early 2020, which have included developing and implementing control measures for potential and actual hazards of SARS-CoV-2 based on available information about the different modes of transmission (i.e. aerosol, droplet and contact) and the hierarchy of controls. Back in April 2020, the OHAO Board of Directors contacted members in government and healthcare agencies to offer assistance in the prevention of transmission in the workplace. In January 2021, OHAO was a participating body in an open letter that was sent to the prime minister, premiers and chief medical officers of the federal, provincial and territorial government entitled, "*Time for government to take aerosol transmission of COVID-19 seriously*". See the letter here: [Time for government to take aerosol transmission of COVID-19 seriously | Ricochet](#).

We agree with your statement that a multi-disciplinary approach is necessary to ensure the correct modes of transmission are properly recognized. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that a similar multi-disciplinary approach, which includes occupational hygiene professionals, is needed to recommend adequate control measures for all possible modes of transmission in the workplace. We strongly believe that through a collaborative approach with key stakeholders in workplace health and safety (such as the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and other Partners in Prevention that already employ many of our members) that we can best prevent or mitigate the risk of exposure of infectious diseases in the workplace.

Our members are uniquely positioned to help employers navigate through the risk assessment process, and their set of competencies allow them to effectively guide employers around the proper selection of control measures based on the hierarchy of controls, which often go beyond the baseline public health measures, to ensure they are adequate for worker protection.

On April 26, 2021, the OHAO Board of Directors sent a letter to the Ministry of Labour and Skills Development encouraging them to do more to reduce risk of spread of the new variants of concern that appear to be overwhelming previously prescribed control measures in many workplaces. OHAO made specific points for consideration centered on ventilation, enhanced PPE, onsite testing and stop work orders to manage the risk of aerosol transmission. [Please see the letter here.](#)

We are confident that your agency will engage collaboratively and take a multi-disciplinary approach with key stakeholders in workplace health and safety (such as the MLTSD, other Partners in Prevention, and occupational hygiene professionals) who have been working tirelessly to prevent workplace transmission.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions about our professional association or our membership.

Yours Sincerely,

Anne-Marie Landis-Groom MHSc, CIH, ROH
OHAO President, on behalf of OHAO Board of Directors