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The Personal Care Industry Must Improve Health And Safety Standards

Jai Paul · Thursday, February 11th, 2021

Adrian Dix, British Columbia's health minister, in addressing the impact of the Covid-19 related closures on the personal-care industry, is reported by the [Times Colonist](#), to have said that the beauty business and hair salons will have to dramatically improve upon their hygiene and safety protocols and practices if they are to be permitted to reopen.

The sector is particularly of concern given that they involve a great deal of person-to-person contact, for the full range of their offerings. The Covid-19 virus spreads through close person-to-person contact with people infected by the virus and the respiratory droplets they emit either through coughing or even talking. So, hair and beauty salons are often high risk areas given the close proximity within which people work or have their personal care needs met.

The risks then and the minister's concerns are clear: hair and beauty salons can create conditions in which a person can come into contact with a Covid-19 positive person, even if that person is asymptomatic, and catch the virus.

A less significant risk is that people in a salon may come into contact with [commonly-shared surfaces](#), such as chairs and tools, which could still have Covid-19 particles on their surfaces.

It is understandable, then, that the health minister warned that reopening was contingent on the personal care sector improving their practices as one. The Labour government deregulated the personal care industry in 2003 and so, there is no trade body representing the industry or unified set of regulations governing health and safety. So, not only is there a lack of coordination, there is also a lot of haziness regarding what appropriate standards the industry as a whole must work under in order to ensure safe and sanitary spaces in salons. With the province battling the Covid-19 pandemic and intent on pressing on with social distancing rules, there is no space for confusion and for error. The province simply cannot afford to make mistakes.

The minister did not, however, go as far as to say that the sector would come under renewed regulations, but he did discuss the fact that many people within the industry have debated for some time what an appropriate set of regulations could be for the industry.

The minister would like the sector to raise its standards, but at a more elementary level, the minister's concern is that the present health and safety standards need to be met. Before ambition must come compliance.

It is still up in the air whether new legislation is needed to ensure observance of existing standards, but in the minister's eyes, there is definitely a need to "dramatically" improve upon existing practices.

Certainly, if you look at other industries, such as dentistry, you will see that there is already in the economy an evolution toward higher and higher health and safety standards. If you visit a [dentist in](#)

[Kitsilano](#) for example, you will see that dentists have adapted aggressively to the new normal. The Times Colonist spoke to Dr. Bonnie Henry, a public health officer, who said that there were already local health regulations, but given the size of the sector, the real problem is one of enforcement, not an absence of standards. Quite simply, there are so many salons that standards are largely enforced after a complaint is filed. Going forward, it is clear that regulatory authorities need more resources to ensure that regulations are complied with before we can think about the possibility of renewed regulations.

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