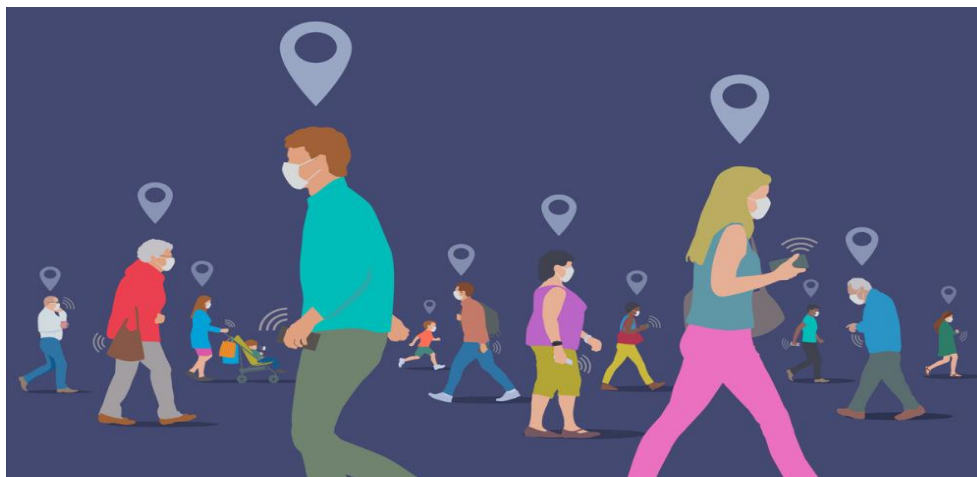


Uptake of COVID app promoted by industry group

‘Tracing can be a very effective tool to limit the spread’



The COVID Alert uses Bluetooth technology to alert users that they were in close proximity to someone who tested positive for the virus and reported it to public health officials.

By John Dujay - Aug 05, 2020

A new COVID-19 tracing app launched in Ontario on July 31 and for the construction industry, it's a "no-brainer" that everyone should download it to help stop the spread of the deadly virus.

So says **Andrew Pariser, vice-president at the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON)** in Toronto.

"This isn't just a construction issue, this is an issue for everyone," he says. "Tracing can be a very effective tool to limit the spread of COVID-19. And it can help us manage the pandemic and keep people safe, if enough people download the app, and if enough people use it on a daily basis."

Now that everybody knows all about COVID-19, the next battlefield is ambivalence, says Pariser.

“It’s good that people feel safe but it’s dangerous when that feeling of safety makes people complacent. We know what we can do and it’s not hard to figure out what we need to do but it’s really hard to do it. It’s really hard to stay six feet apart, it’s really hard to wear a mask every day.”

Usage key for app success

The app, COVID Alert, was released by Health Canada and is available for Android and Apple users. It uses Bluetooth technology to alert users that they had spent more than 15 minutes in close proximity to someone who has tested positive for the virus and reported it to public health officials.

And it does not store any data, says Pariser, making privacy concerns moot.

“The impression that I have is that this is as private as it can get; from what I’ve seen and heard, this app is a leader when it comes to privacy and data protection. There’s a third-party group that is collecting the data and it’s only stored for 21 days. My understanding is it’s deleted and so it’s not employers that are getting this data,” says Pariser. “To me, it’s a no brainer; I don’t even see privacy as an issue.”



Andrew Pariser

But usage rates are key, he says.

“The effectiveness of the app greatly increases once you get 55 per cent of the population; the more people that download it, the better.”

Construction onboard

The construction industry recognized early on that the coronavirus was serious and needed to be addressed, says Pariser.

“Construction was the first sector to get COVID-19 policies and we were the first sector in Ontario to get it. A lot of the work that was done in other sectors came from those efforts and we’re very proud of it,” he says. “When you look at the stats and you look at WSIB injury rates and infection rates, knock on wood, construction’s done very well.”

As a result, RESCON members are very supportive of the new app.

“We’re promoting a voluntary approach and the idea is this is about the good of all Ontarians and their families. Instead of telling people what to do, we’re asking them to do the right thing,” he says. “We’re not going to come out and mandate it or tell anyone they have to do it. But we will eliminate barriers to downloading it, we will be supportive in that.”

For many businesses, [there are also several legal concerns around screening employees](#) coming back into workplaces.

There are also [multiple critical safety considerations to think about](#) as the economy reopens.