

Some businesses absorbing cost of PPE, not applying COVID-19 surcharge

Jenny Yuen More from Jenny Yuen

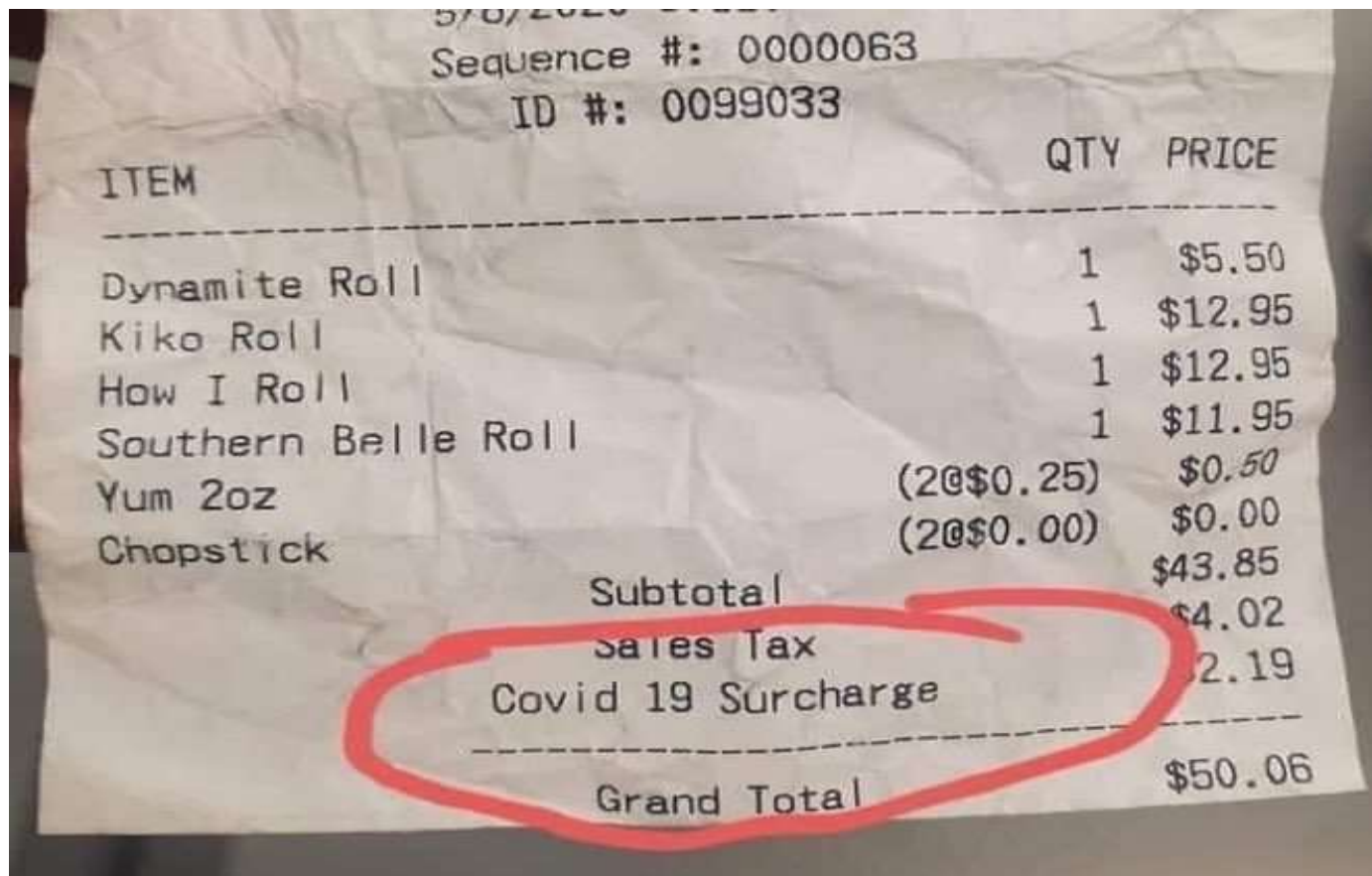
<https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/some-businesses-absorbing-cost-of-ppe-not-applying-covid-19-surcharge>

Published: June 2, 2020

Updated: June 2, 2020 9:25 AM EDT

Filed Under:

- [Toronto SUN](#)
- [News](#)
- [Toronto & GTA](#)



Some Canadian and American businesses have been charging a COVID-19 surcharge to offset PPE costs. @AngelWong_ / TWITTER

While businesses can apply a COVID-19 surcharge to cover the cost of personal protective equipment (PPE), some are choosing to absorb the cost instead of passing it on to customers.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers said that many of its members are facing higher costs from the supply chain — increased prices for meat products by up to 40%, for example — as well as paying for PPE to protect workers and customers. On top of that, there have been a migration towards cashless transactions, which means increased cost of banking fees. Still, none of its members intends making customers pay for it.

“All the surcharges we know of, are the ones we’re paying,” said CFG’s Gary Sands. Not one of our independent grocers are implementing surcharges, but we are for sure absorbing other surcharges.”

The airline industry, which has been among the hardest hit since the pandemic began in mid-March, at least in Canada, said it won’t be charging the extra fee.

Canada’s big three airlines, Air Canada, Air Transat and WestJet, said they are not planning on issuing a COVID-19 surcharge as the travel industry slowly bounces back. Air Canada spokesman Peter Fitzpatrick said its airline is still operating a limited schedule “and it will grow to nearly 100 destinations this summer. There are no plans for any surcharge for COVID.”

“We have made no decision for now to create a COVID-19 surcharge when our operations restart,” said Air Transat spokesman Christophe Hennebelle.

Meanwhile, WestJet spokesman Morgan Bell said with the demand for air travel dropping almost 90% and subsequent border closures, WestJet has reduced its workforce by more than 9,000 employees and parked more than two-thirds of their airbuses since March.

“We are now solely a domestic carrier, keeping essential travel and goods flowing to the 38 Canadian airports we currently serve. I can confirm that we do not have plans to implement this surcharge,” said Bell.

“COVID-19 and its devastating impact on all aspects of life globally has not yet run its course. To suggest that air travel will look a certain way in the future would be speculation as the effects of this pandemic are unprecedented. We are actively working with all partners, regulators and governments across our network to deal with the immediate impacts of this crisis, including the damaging effects on demand.”

Mount Pleasant Cemetery Group also said it doesn't plan on charging the extra fee on top of funeral bills.

“As far as we're concerned, we're providing a service that we have all along, as well, we've made some changes to our procedures that we don't see any reason to increase our costs,” said the group's vice-president of marketing and communications Rick Cowan.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business previously told the Sun that anecdotally, a number of their members have chosen to add the surcharge, but it's up to each business to decide whether they want to and how much.

“What we've been hearing is the government says we need masks or hand sanitizer onsite. There's a cost associated with that or an employee has to spend time monitoring or screening clients, so we're putting a surcharge on,” said Ryan Mallough, CFIB director of provincial affairs.

“It’s not something they’re required to do. They could always build that into the cost of the goods, but they see this as a more transparency effort to pass those costs on.”

However, besides restaurants and salons, one surprisingly place you may notice a COVID-19 surcharge may be when you go to the dentist.

Depending on the procedure, dentists may need more or less PPE, such as gowns and face shields. And right now, as routine care resumes in Ontario as of Monday, Canadian dentists are working with private health insurance companies to see if they would be willing to take on the cost using a unique billing code.

“Up until now, it’s been difficult to get the PPE and we’ve heard our federal minister of health call it a ‘wild west’ situation,” said Dr. David Stevenson, a past president of the Ontario Dental Association who is heading a return to work task force for dentists.

Coronavirus is adding to my bill. Ate out for lunch and there was a \$2 "SURCHARGE". I asked what the heck that was and was told it was for the Covid-19 virus. What?! Is the virus hungry also? am I buying it lunch also?

“Some procedures and patients, we’ll need more PPE — like water spray — then how do you adequately reflect that in your fee for dental services?...This is so new, that we don’t have the luxury of saying this is going to be a 3% or 4% (charge). If we were to provide the full treatment with full requirement for PPE, it could be about \$65.”

Stevenson recommends that if dentists choose to charge the fee, to have an upfront and transparent discussion with the patient about what that fee is going towards.

“No one likes sticker shock.” he said.