Can COVID-19 be Transmitted Through Items and Surfaces?

Human coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze
- close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands (1)

There is limited evidence available specific to the transmission of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) through items and surfaces. However, the virus has been detected on surfaces and this is a likely source of transmission based on experience with other coronaviruses (2).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States has indicated that the virus is spread mainly from person to person and is not spread easily in other ways such as from touching surfaces or objects. (3)

How Long does the Virus that causes COVID-19 remain Viable on Surfaces?

Health Canada has based their recommendations on the following assumption:

The virus that causes COVID-19 can survive from several hours to days depending on several factors (4).
Length of survival may vary under different conditions such as surface type, relative temperature or humidity of the environment. The virus has been detectable up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to two to three days on plastic and stainless steel. (5)

Resources and References
1. Prevention and Risks – Health Canada
2. What We Know About.. Routes of Transmission – Public Health Ontario
3. How It Spreads – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention