



Background and Gathering Limits

The Grey Bruce Health Unit entered Stage 3 of reopening on July 17, 2020. In keeping with the gradual approach to reopening the province, Ontario will continue to monitor key public health indicators and some Stage 3 restrictions will be further eased over time when it is safe to do so. In Stage 3, indoor gathering limits increased to a maximum of 50 people. Outdoor gathering limits increased to a maximum of 100 people. In all cases, individuals are required to continue to maintain physical distancing of at least two metres with people from outside their households or social circles.

People gathering indoors for religious services, rites or ceremonies, and wedding ceremonies or funeral services, can continue to fill up to 30 per cent of the capacity of the particular room, as introduced in Stage 2.

Social circles should continue to be kept at 10 people province-wide. A social circle is a group of up to 10 of the same people who can interact with one another without physical distancing. Social circles can help to reduce social isolation and support mental health and wellbeing. To learn more about creating a social circle, visit the [Create a social circle during COVID-19](#) webpage.

Provincial Sector Guidance for Places of Worship

Rules for Areas in Stage 3 – [O. Reg 364/20](#)

Schedule 3 Organized Public Events, Certain Gatherings

Indoor wedding, funeral or religious service, rite or ceremony

3. (1) This section applies with respect to gatherings for the purposes of a wedding, a funeral or a religious service, rite or ceremony, if the gathering is held in a building or structure other than a private dwelling.

(2) No person shall attend a gathering to which this section applies unless the following conditions are met:

1. The number of persons occupying any room in the building or structure while attending the gathering must not exceed 30 per cent of the capacity of the particular room.
2. All persons attending the gathering must comply with public health guidance on physical distancing.

Outdoor wedding, funeral or religious service, rite or ceremony

4. (1) This section applies with respect to outdoor gatherings for the purposes of a wedding, a funeral or a religious service, rite or ceremony.

(2) No person shall attend a gathering to which this section applies unless the following conditions are met:

1. No more than 100 people may be in attendance.
2. All persons attending the gathering must comply with public health guidance on physical distancing.

Gathering in motor vehicles for religious service, rite or ceremony

5. (1) This section applies with respect to gatherings for the purposes of a religious service, rite or ceremony if the persons attending the gathering, other than those conducting the service, rite or ceremony, do so in a motor vehicle.

(2) No person shall attend a gathering to which this section applies unless the person follows all of the following precautions that apply to the person:

1. Each person attending the gathering, other than the persons conducting the service, rite or ceremony, must remain within a motor vehicle that is designed to be closed to the elements, except,
 - i. where necessary to use a washroom, or
 - ii. as may otherwise be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.
2. The driver of a motor vehicle must ensure that it is positioned at least two metres away from other motor vehicles.

3. A person who ordinarily uses a non-motorized vehicle because of their religious belief and who attends the gathering must remain within their non-motorized vehicle except where necessary to use a washroom or as may otherwise be required for health and safety, and paragraph 2 applies with necessary modifications.

Reopening Ontario

In Ontario, there will be a gradual, staged approach to reopening businesses, services and public spaces. [A Framework for Reopening our Province](#) outlines the criteria that will be used when loosening emergency measures.

As Ontario reopens, the following measures remain important:

- Wash hands with soap and water frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Practise physical distancing by keeping a distance of 2 metres from other people
- Wear a cloth mask or non-medical face covering if physical distancing is a challenge
- Stay home if you are sick
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow
- Avoid touching your face

Some services and activities have a higher risk of spreading the virus. Reopening is determined by the overall riskiness of the activities and services. The riskiness of different services and activities depends on:

- The number of people who come together for the activity or service
- The length of time people are together and the physical distance between them
- The ability to modify the activity or service to make it less risky (so that there are less people, shorter lengths of times together, and/or more distance between them)

Health and Safety

In order to reopen, you must follow the health and safety guidance provided by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and Health and Safety Associations. Find sector-specific guidance and posters to help protect workers, customers and the

general public from COVID-19 on Ontario's [resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace webpage](#).

[Guidance on Health and Safety for Places of Worship During COVID-19](#) – Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

Additional Considerations for Places of Worship

Keep Informed

- Continue to monitor the local and provincial situation and measures that are in place.
- Consult with local, provincial and national networks for suggestions on how services and ceremonies can be adapted to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Education and Training

- Ensure staff are trained and knowledgeable about current practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Provide information and education to visitors and congregations on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Reinforce to participants that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home.
- Additional considerations may need to be made by individuals who are at increased risk of severe health outcomes from COVID-19, such as older adults, people with chronic medical conditions and people with weakened immune systems. See the [How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19](#) resource from Public Health Ontario for more information.

Screening

- Post COVID-19 screening signs at all entrances.
- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or anyone who has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 is not permitted to enter.
- Consider providing information electronically to participants so that they can also complete self-screening for symptoms prior to attending.

Ensure physical distancing and hand hygiene

- Consider how to promote physical distancing of 2 metres between people who are not members of the same household or social circle. This includes seating arrangements and while visitors are arriving and leaving the service or ceremony.
- To support good hand hygiene, ensure you have adequate supplies of items such as alcohol-based hand sanitizer, soap and paper towel.
- Consider posting signage to remind those attending of physical distancing and hand hygiene measures.

Encourage the use of face coverings and cloth masks.

- It is recommended that staff and visitors wear a cloth mask or other non-medical face covering if physical distancing cannot be maintained at all times. See the [Non-medical Masks and Face Coverings](#) resource from Public Health Ontario.

Enhance Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces often. For more information see the [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#) resource from Public Health Ontario.
- Clean and disinfect or eliminate objects that multiple people may touch. Do not share items that cannot be cleaned, such as books or prayer mats. Do not pass offering plates.
- Avoid providing communion during COVID-19 until a modified version can be developed.

Structure and Gathering Practices

- Adhere to provincial requirements regarding the maximum number of people permitted to participate.
- Consider alternatives to in-person gathering or how the size of services could be minimized by having multiple services or a combination of online and in-person services. This may be particularly important to involve individuals at greater risk from COVID-19.

- Consider ways to greet each other from a distance. Do not shake hands, hug or elbow bump.
- Eliminate communal items touched by multiple people, such as those used during communion or bulletins that are passed out.
- Limit singing and loud speaking. Consider the respiratory droplets created when singing or speaking loudly. Avoid singing together. Consider solo performances, instrumental music or pre-recorded music. The following practices are recommended:
 - No congregational singing and chanting. Spoken responses should be in a low voice. Leaders should use microphones unless the space is very small.
 - No choir. A single cantor or soloist may be used, but should be located away from the congregation (e.g. minimum of four metres), facing sideways or behind a screen, or otherwise separated from the congregation, but not in a balcony. Consider using recorded music, including of your own choir.
 - With instrumental music (e.g. piano, organ, but not wind instruments), if more than one is being played, ensure physical distancing, unless players are from the same household.
- Special considerations for child activities and nursery care are needed. Children need to stay with their household or social circle.
- Special considerations for not providing or sharing food as a part of religious services or ceremonies will be needed. [Community food programs](#) like take away meals and food banks may still operate with the support of faith-based organizations.
- Maintain an up to date contact list of staff, volunteers and attendees to support public health contact tracing. Consider tracking attendance.

Everyone can help make a difference by:

- Maintaining physical distancing of at least two metres from people outside of your household or social circle

- Wearing a face covering in indoor and outdoor public spaces where physical distancing is a challenge
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water
- Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Practising good hygiene (covering a cough and sneeze and avoiding touching your face)
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces more often
- Limiting indoor gatherings to a maximum of 50 people, or less, to maintain physical distancing
- Limiting outdoor gatherings to a maximum of 100 people, or less, to maintain physical distancing
- Staying at home and away from others if you are feeling ill or have symptoms of COVID-19
- Downloading the COVID Alert app, when launched, to be notified if you have been in contact with anyone with COVID-19
- Working from home or remotely as much as possible
- Minimizing travel and self-isolating for 14 days after all international travel
- Protecting the most vulnerable by following public health advice
- Getting tested if you are worried you have or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19

Questions?

The province has set up a Business Information Line to provide direction to businesses as they reopen. Please call Stop the Spread Business Information Line at 1-888-444-3659.

For Health and Safety Guidance, please call your relevant Health and Safety provider, or the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development at: 1-833-247-3650.

For Public Health guidance please call the general information line at 519-376-9420 ext 3000.

References and Additional Resources

[Guidance for Places of Worship](#) – May 18, 2020 – Government of Alberta

[COVID-19 Guidance for Re-opening Places of Worship](#) – Toronto Public Health

[Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#) – Ontario

[Community and Business Resiliency Map](#) - including local PPE suppliers – Grey County

[COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplaces](#) – Ontario Ministry of Health

[COVID-19 Considerations for Choirs and Bands](#) – Grey Bruce Health Unit

[Ontario Eases Restrictions on Wedding and Funeral Ceremonies](#) – June 13, 2020

[Emergency Order Organized public events, certain gatherings](#)

[Emergency Orders](#) – Government of Ontario