

GUIDANCE FOR GATHERINGS AND COVID-19

This guidance is intended for organizers and attendees of gatherings or community events in the County of Simcoe and the District Municipality of Muskoka. It is based on what is [currently known about COVID-19](#), and will be updated as additional information becomes available.

A gathering is any event with a number of people in close contact for an extended period of time. This includes concerts, festivals, conferences, worship services, cultural and sporting events. The level of risk depends on several factors, including the number of people, participants' health, and activities being undertaken.

Public gatherings can contribute to the transmission of infections, including COVID-19. The potential risks for transmission include increased crowds, limited social distancing and restricted points of access/exit which force participants through high touch areas (e.g. doors, elevators).

Limited environmental cleaning and the potential for individual health measures (e.g. hand hygiene) may also play a role in transmission risks at public gatherings. In an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit strongly recommends the following:

PLEASE USE THIS GUIDANCE FOR ALL PUBLIC GATHERINGS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

ORGANIZERS

EVENTS OF OVER 50 PEOPLE

At this time, the Chief Medical Officer of Health has recommended immediate suspension of all public gatherings of over 50 people.

These orders were approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and will remain in place until March 31, 2020, at which point they will be reassessed and considered for extension, unless this order is terminated earlier.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVENTS OF 50 PEOPLE OR LESS

Consider canceling or postponing all non-essential public events (e.g. meetings, dinners, communal services) particularly those that will include international attendees or [vulnerable populations](#).

Other risk mitigation strategies could include:

- reducing the number of participants or changing the venue to prevent crowding;
- planning your gathering to accommodate attendees maintaining a 6 foot distance from each other (e.g. taping off chairs, staggering tables);
- staggering arrivals and departures;
- providing packaged refreshments instead of a buffet;
- increasing access to handwashing stations;
- promoting personal protective practices (e.g. hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill);
- offering virtual or live-streamed activities; and
- changing the event program to reduce high risk activities such as those that require physical contact between participants.

For more information when planning social, cultural or entertainment events where crowds are anticipated, refer to the following guidance documents:

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
[World Health Organization](#)

ATTENDEES

- Do not attend conferences or other gatherings if you are a health care worker or employee of a critical infrastructure entity (e.g. police, firefighter, paramedic), or if you would have difficulty being in home isolation for 14 days.
- Do not attend events when you are sick. Stay home, except to get medical care.
- If you do attend gatherings, be mindful of maintaining a 2 metre distance from others and ensuring that you clean your hands frequently with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

In response to Ontario school closures between March 14 through April 5, 2020, please **do not** send your child to gatherings or other group settings if they are sick.