

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR EVENTS & GATHERINGS – PROVINCEWIDE SHUTDOWN

Last revised: December 21, 2020

Due to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, the Government of Ontario has implemented a Provincewide Shutdown starting December 26, 2020 12:01 a.m. until January 23, 2020 11:59 p.m.

Public health and other experts have expressed significant concerns that the current transmission trends, combined with the potential high levels of mobility from social and consumer activity over the holiday period, could overwhelm health care and public health sector capacity in the New Year. A province wide shutdown will help interrupt or slow current community transmission, reduce mobility and allow our health care and public health systems that are reaching critical limits and to recover briefly and catch-up.

As a result, we must do everything we can to contain the virus' spread, including limiting trips outside of the home to only those with essential purposes (work, school, groceries/pharmacy, and health care, assisting vulnerable individuals, or exercise and physical activity) and avoiding social gatherings.

An event or gathering is any occasion that involves a number of people in proximity to each other for an extended period of time. This includes weddings, receptions, concerts, festivals, conferences, and cultural and sporting events. Events or gatherings can contribute to the transmission of infections, including COVID-19. The potential risks for transmission include increased crowds, limited physical distancing, and restricted points of access/exit which force participants through high touch areas (e.g. doors, elevators). The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has the following Gathering Limits in the Provincewide- Shutdown Level:

GATHERING LIMITS – PROVINCEWIDE SHUTDOWN

	Gathering/Event	Religious Service, Wedding and Funerals	
Setting	Any event where physical distancing can be maintained (whether monitored or unmonitored).	Building or structure other than a private dwelling	Private Dwelling/backyard
Indoor Capacity	Prohibited at this time	Ceremony – 10 people or less Dinner/reception – prohibited at this time	Prohibited at this time
Outdoor Capacity	10 people or less	Ceremony – 10 people or less Dinner/reception – prohibited at this time	10 people or less
Drive-in	Drive-in or drive-through events are prohibited at this time	Drive-in services subject to certain conditions	n/a

- An indoor event or gathering **cannot** be combined with an outdoor event or gathering to increase the applicable limit on the number of people at the event or gathering.
- For events fully or partially indoors, the indoor capacity limits apply.
- Events outside using a tent or covering with two or more sides/walls; refer to indoor requirements.
- People at their place of work, including performers and crews, **do not** count towards gathering limits but vendors are included in these numbers.
- In all cases, individuals are required to continue to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from people outside their household.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZERS

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Consider canceling or postponing all non-essential public events (e.g. meetings, dinners, communal services), particularly if they include people who are more vulnerable to the virus, such as the elderly or those who are immune-compromised.
- Offer virtual or live-streamed activities.
- Restrict non-essential travel from areas of high-transmission to areas of low-transmission.
- Develop a [safety plan](#) that describes all public health measures.
- Advise employees and attendees to complete a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before coming to the event and stay home if they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), seek testing, and [self-isolate](#).
- Be aware of the potential for inclement weather and develop a plan to accommodate attendees if severe weather suddenly arises (e.g. plan for a safe indoor space while ensuring physical distancing and provide face coverings for all attendees, or cancelling the gathering/event if inclement weather is predicted or if the attendees cannot be safely moved indoors). Cancellation is required requires to be moved indoors.
- Promote personal protective practices (e.g. face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill) by posting signs, such as those available on SMDHU's [website](#).

PHYSICAL DISTANCING MEASURES

- Plan to accommodate physical distancing by maintaining a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) distance between participants from different households (e.g. taping off chairs, staggering tables).
- Post signs to remind attendees to maintain a 2 metre (6 feet) distance from others not in their immediate household. Stagger arrivals and departures to avoid congregation of crowds on the initiation and conclusion of the event.
- Eliminate high risk activities such as those that may result in physical contact between attendees outside of their household.
- Close or restrict access to non-essential common areas (e.g. photo booth with props, merchandise kiosks, concession stands, and communal lounges).
- Reduce the number of attendees or change the venue to prevent crowding.

FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- [Face coverings](#) are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.
- Eye protection is required for staff who may come in contact (within 2 metres) with a patron without a mask or face covering
- For religious, wedding or funeral: Officiant can choose not to wear a face covering while speaking, and 4 metre separation between other people attending is adhered to.

DANCING, SINGERS & MUSICAL PERFORMERS

- Performances, singing and dancing are prohibited.

HAND HYGIENE, PUBLIC WASHROOMS & WASTE RECEPTACLES

- Post [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) posters in high traffic area and encourage all attendees to wash their hands with soap and water or sanitize their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol-based) as they arrive and frequently during the event.
- Increase access to hand hygiene stations.
- Follow [Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms](#) for important information about requirements for safety and cleaning precautions.
- Provide sufficient numbers of garbage receptacles for attendees to dispose of used sanitizing wipes, masks, gloves, and other waste properly.

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PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS THAT SERVE FOOD

All special events that serve food require approval from the SMDHU. For more information regarding special events and applicable application forms please visit <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/FoodSafety/SpecialEvents>. If meal service is provided follow these [best practices for food safety](#) and these guidelines for food service. Provide pre-packaged refreshments.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

REFERENCES

- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020). *Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html#a2>
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. (2020). *Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms*. Retrieved from: http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/public-washrooms-guidance-document_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=0
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-provincewide-shutdownC>