

COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open Requirements for Museums

Overview

In November 2020, Ontario implemented a scalable response framework, the [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#).

The framework takes a gradual approach that includes introducing preventative measures earlier to help avoid broader closures and allow for additional safety measures to be introduced or removed incrementally. The framework categorizes public health unit regions into five levels: Green-Prevent, Yellow-Protect, Orange-Restrict, Red-Control, and Grey-Lockdown. Each level outlines the public health and workplace safety measures for businesses and organizations, and includes targeted measures for specific sectors, institutions and other settings. Additional restrictions beyond those in the colour coded framework may be imposed if required.

[O. Reg. 363/20: Stages of Reopening](#) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#) can be consulted to check the current zones for individual public health units.

In general, museums in shut down zones or grey zones must remain closed, while museums in red zones may reopen with high touch or interactive exhibits kept closed. Museums in orange, yellow or green zones can keep high touch and interactive exhibits open, but must adhere to cleaning requirements.

Shutdown Zone Requirements (Stage 1)

Per [O. Reg. 82/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 1](#), museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions located in shutdown zones must be closed to members of the public.

Grey Zone Requirements for Museums (Stage 1)

Museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions located in grey zones must be closed to members of the public.

However, organizations located in grey zones may open to provide drive-in or drive-through access to the public provided they comply with specific conditions. See [O. Reg. 82/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 1](#) for more information.

Red Zone Requirements for Museums (Stage 2)

[O. Reg. 263/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 2](#) provides the requirements for PHUs that are in the red zone. There are six relevant sections of the regulation for museums.

General compliance: This section includes general requirements around wearing masks, PPE, and adhering to the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health around physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting. See the link above for more information.

Capacity limits for businesses or facilities open to the public: This section sets out the capacity limits for public spaces, including museums. A distance of two meters must be maintained in indoor spaces. The specific regulation is as follows:

3. (1) Subject to any additional restrictions set out in this Order, the person responsible for a place of business or facility that is open to the public shall limit the number of persons in the place of business or facility so that every member of the public is able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility.

Physical distancing and masks or face coverings in lines, etc.: Museums and similar attractions must ensure that individuals lining up inside or outside of their facility comply with public health requirements. The specific regulation is as follows:

3.2 The person responsible for a business or place that is open must not permit patrons to line up inside the business or place, or to line up or congregate outside of the business or place, unless they are,

- (a) maintaining a physical distance of at least two metres from other groups of persons; and
- (b) wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in subsection 2 (4).

Safety plan: Businesses that are open are required to prepare and make available a safety plan that describes the measures and procedures that have been implemented to reduce the transmission risk of COVID-19. **[O. Reg. 263/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 2](#)** contains additional information on required content and posting instructions.

Cleaning requirements: Museums must adhere to the specific cleaning requirements for public spaces. Washrooms, locker rooms and change rooms, as well as equipment provided or rented to the public, must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. The specific regulation is as follows:

7. (1) The person responsible for a business or place that is open shall ensure that,

- (a) any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition; and
- (b) any equipment that is rented to, provided to or provided for the use of members of the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.

(2) For greater certainty, clause (1) (b) applies to computers, electronics and other machines or devices that members of the public are permitted to operate.

Museums, etc.: This section sets out the requirements for interactive and high touch exhibits, which must remain closed in museums located in a red zone. The regulation is as follows:

23. Museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions may open if they comply with the following conditions:

1. No member of the public may be permitted access to interactive exhibits or exhibits that would create a high risk of personal contact.
2. Lockers must not be provided to members of the public.
3. Any equipment that is rented or provided to patrons must be cleaned and disinfected between each use.

Additional Requirements

Museums may be subject to additional requirements based on their facilities and the services they offer (e.g., hosting meetings or events; engaging in the sale and service of liquor; offering in-person teaching and instruction; restaurants; retail sales, etc.). Organizations are encouraged to review [O. Reg. 263/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 2](#) in detail and call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line (1-888-444-3659) if they have questions about complying with current requirements.

Orange, Yellow and Green Zone (Stage 3) Requirements for Museums

[O. Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#) provides the requirements for PHUs that are in the orange, yellow and green zones. There are six relevant sections of the regulation.

General compliance: This involves general requirements around wearing masks, PPE, and adhering to the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health around physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting. See the link above for more information.

Capacity limits for businesses or facilities open to the public: This section sets out the capacity limits for public spaces, including museums. A distance of two meters must be maintained in indoor spaces. The specific regulation is as follows:

3. (1) The person responsible for a place of business or facility that is open to the public shall limit the number of persons in the place of business or facility so that every member of the public is able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility, except where Schedule 2 allows persons to be closer together.

Physical distancing and masks or face coverings in lines, etc.: Museums and similar attractions must ensure that individuals lining up inside or outside of their facility comply with public health requirements. The specific regulation is as follows:

3.2 The person responsible for a business or place that is open must not permit patrons to line up inside the business or place, or to line up or congregate outside of the business or place, unless they are,

- (a) maintaining a physical distance of at least two metres from other groups of persons; and
- (b) wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in subsection 2 (4).

Safety plan: Businesses that are open are required to prepare and make available a safety plan that describes the measures and procedures that have been implemented to reduce the transmission risk of COVID-19. [O. Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#) contains additional information on required content and posting instructions.

Cleaning requirements: Museums must adhere to the specific cleaning requirements for public spaces. Washrooms, locker rooms and change rooms, as well as equipment provided or rented to the public, must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. The specific regulation is as follows:

6. (1) The person responsible for a business or place that is open shall ensure that,
- (a) any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition; and
 - (b) any equipment that is rented to, provided to or provided for the use of members of the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.

(2) For greater certainty, clause (1) (b) applies to computers, electronics and other machines or devices that members of the public are permitted to operate.

Museums, etc.: This section sets out the requirements for interactive and high touch exhibits, which can remain open in museums in an orange, yellow or green zone as long as they are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. The regulation is as follows:

18. Museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions may open if any interactive exhibits, or exhibits that create a high risk of personal contact, that are open to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.

Additional Requirements

Some organizations may be subject to additional requirements based on their facilities and services (e.g., meeting or event space, sale and service of liquor, in-person teaching and instruction, restaurants, retail sales). Some of the requirements for these facilities or services may vary depending on if the PHU is in an Orange, Yellow, or Green zone. Organizations are encouraged to review the [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#) and [O. Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#) in detail and call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line (1-888-444-3659) if they have questions about complying with current requirements.