

NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Limits the Size of Unmonitored and Private Social Gatherings across Entire Province

Province Takes Decisive Action to Stop the Spread of COVID-19

September 19, 2020

[Office of the Premier](#)

TORONTO — The Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Public Health Measures Table, is reducing limits on the number of people permitted to attend unmonitored and private social gatherings across the entire province. Earlier this week, the government imposed these restrictions in Toronto, Peel Region and Ottawa.

The details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

"Over the past several days, we have seen an alarming growth in the number of COVID-19 cases in the province," said Premier Ford. "Clearly, the numbers are heading in the wrong direction. That's why we are taking decisive action to lower the size of unmonitored private social gatherings in every region of Ontario. We need everyone to follow the public health rules in order to prevent another provincewide lockdown, and protect all our citizens, especially the elderly and the vulnerable."

Unmonitored and private social gatherings include functions, parties, dinners, gatherings, BBQs or wedding receptions held in private residences, backyards, parks and other recreational areas.

The new limit on the number of people allowed to attend an unmonitored private social gathering across the province is:

- 10 people at an indoor event or gathering (previous limit of 50); or
- 25 people at an outdoor event or gathering (previous limit of 100).

Indoor and outdoor events and gatherings cannot be merged together. Gatherings of 35 (25 outdoors and 10 indoors) are not permitted.

"We are taking further action to slow the spread and limit new cases of COVID-19 by reducing the size of private social gatherings across Ontario. This action is based on the increasing case counts that we are seeing," said Minister Elliott. "As we continue to closely monitor the spread of this virus, we will never hesitate to take further action to protect the health and well-being of all Ontarians."

The new limits will not apply to events or gatherings held in staffed businesses and facilities, such as bars, restaurants, cinemas, convention centres, banquet halls, gyms, places of worship, recreational sporting or performing art events. Existing rules, including public health and workplace safety measures for these businesses and facilities, continue to be in effect.

These new limits are effective immediately.

To support better compliance with public health guidelines, amendments to the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act* would, if passed, establish:

- A new offence regarding hosting or organizing a gathering in residential premises or other prescribed premises that exceeds limits under an order.
- A minimum fine of \$10,000 for organizers of these gatherings.
- Authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to prescribe additional types of premises for the purpose of the new offence.
- Authority for a police officer, special constable or First Nations constable to order the temporary closure of a premises where there are reasonable grounds to believe that any gathering exceeding the number of people allowed is taking place and require individuals to leave the premises.

"It is critical that we continue to take the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of all Ontarians," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "We are making it easier for communities to keep people safe through a broad array of tools and deterrents including stiffer penalties for organizing social gatherings at private residences that violate the applicable size

restrictions. Today's expansion of gathering restrictions across the province shows that we remain agile in our response to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Ontario."

The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other public health experts continue to closely monitor the evolving situation to advise when public health measures or restrictions can be further loosened or if they need to be tightened.

It remains critically important for everyone to continue following public health advice. This includes:

- staying home when ill, or keeping your child home from school when ill, even with mild symptoms;
- practising physical distancing with those outside your household or social circle, or at gatherings;
- protecting your social circle;
- wearing a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge or where it is mandatory to do so;
- washing your hands frequently and thoroughly; and
- adhering to gathering limits and rules.

For additional protection, the Ontario government is encouraging everyone to download the new COVID Alert app on their smart phone from the Apple and Google Play app stores.

Quick Facts

- On July 24, 2020, the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act (ROA)* came into force to ensure important measures remained in place after the provincial declared emergency came to an end. Under the ROA, orders can be extended for up to 30 days at a time. The government will continue to review all orders continued under the ROA and will report on order extensions to the [Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight](#).
- Some local municipalities may have enacted by-laws or local medical officers of health may have issued Section 22 orders under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, mandating the use of face coverings, and other restrictions, in some settings. Other medical officers of health may have mandated the use of face coverings, and other restrictions, through reference to emergency orders. Refer to local municipal or public health unit webpages for more information.
- Over 180 guidance resources are available to businesses to help them safely reopen and keep customers and workers safe.
- Testing is available at any of the province's 147 assessment centres currently open. To find your closest assessment centre, please visit [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus).

Additional Resources

- [Lower Social Gathering Limits Adopted Provincewide to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [Get the facts from Public Health Ontario on how to protect yourself and others.](#)
- [See how your organization can help fight COVID-19.](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
- For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOline at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only).

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