



The Ontario government has made the decision to increase gathering numbers. Effective Friday, June 12, 2020 at 12:01 a.m., the province will increase the limit on social gatherings from five to 10 people across the province, regardless of whether a region has moved to Stage 2. Additionally, all places of worship in Ontario will also be permitted to open with physical distancing in place and attendance limited to no more than 30 per cent of the building capacity to ensure the safety of worshippers. news.ontario.ca We are not wanting our churches to rush back just because they can! And at the same time, we know that questions will come, and the discernment process has begun.

On Tuesday, we are inviting our churches to a Zoom meeting to engage in a conversation about what they are processing and what they might need with regard to any physical reopening strategy. We at ONMB want to serve our churches by providing some guiding questions for the discernment of any physical reopening strategy and we look to our leaders to help form these questions.

The following communication is the product of conversations within churches and organizations across Canada. If it's helpful in any way, please feel free to use it in whatever form that makes sense for your context.

1. COMPLIANCE WITH ONTARIO GOVERNMENT

Our recommendations as a conference are based on an understanding that our churches are required to follow the policy and orders of our Ontario Government and health authority. We strongly encourage you to pay attention to these policies as you discern next steps for your congregation.

RESTRICTIONS BEING EASED IN COMMUNITIES WHERE IT IS SAFE TO DO SO

2. PHYSICAL REOPENING CHURCHES STRATEGY

In light of Ontario's change to permitted group size, your church will face the challenging question of "when/how are we going to physically open?" We've compiled some questions intended to assist in those challenging conversations and plans. **We don't see these questions as exhaustive, but as a sound place to begin your discernment and strategic process.**

- What compelling reason do we have to reopen physically?
- When's the right time to physically reopen? What options should we consider? Should we simply open when the Ontario Government opens the group restrictions to a particular number?
- What do we need to consider about how our people are feeling and thinking? Staff, volunteers, attendees. Should we consider a survey to our congregation? What questions are most helpful to ask?
- What learnings from doing church differently in the past couple of months needs to be brought into a physical re-opening?
- In light of the probability that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue for the short to medium term future, how do we prepare for that part of our future?
- When processing physical re-opening, who are the people responsible for that task? Staff? Board? A task force?
- What's the wise thing to do?
- What about our Liability and Insurance? Have we checked with our policy? Are we protected/covered?

Reference: [Questions for MBCM Churches to Consider](#)

3. SHARING BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES

The current landscape presents some unique challenges & opportunities for how we "do church". What plans do you as a church have in place? ***We invite your input on the best practices you are experiencing and considering. You can submit those by email to klee@onmb.org.***

We are praying that churches are making the most of this opportunity to prayerfully discern the bigger picture of what God is calling them to, in continuing to orient our lives toward Jesus as we go about processing the logistical issues of the day.