



Township of Muskoka Lakes Municipal Operations COVID-19 Reopening Framework

A Roadmap to “New Business as Usual”

Background

In early March 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Township of Muskoka Lakes began implementing unprecedented measures to alter municipal operations to ensure business continuity, but protect staff, members of Council and the community,. These included closure of municipal facilities to the public, redeployment of staff to ensure physical distancing, holding electronic Council and Committee meetings and the development of pick up and drop off services. As the Province moves towards the gradual reopening of the economy and a relaxation of the measures it put in place to combat the spread of COVID-19, there will be an expectation that some of the public programs and services traditionally provided by the Township will once again become available. As we transition from “business as unusual” towards a new normal, or a “new business as usual”, it is imperative that we continue to mitigate risk for staff and our community.

This plan outlines a phased reopening of Township programs and services. In the phases outlined, it is important to understand that all programs and services must adhere to Provincial orders and public health measures in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This plan will be revised to remain in line with the [Framework for Reopening Our Province](#) Provincial health and safety guidance for workplaces, and Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) guidance. The timing of and movement through the phases identified in this plan will depend on direction from the Province and SMDHU, whether or not the Guiding Principles can be met, as well as the Township’s experience in monitoring the situation as spaces, facilities and programs are reopened.

The measures outlined in each of the phases will ensure that spaces, facilities and programs are reopened in a coordinated fashion, adhere to public health measures, and protect staff and our community.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will apply to all phases and guide final decisions on how to approach reopening.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of staff and our community will take priority over reopening. We will follow Provincial and SMDHU guidance when the nature of work will permit. The appendices outline health and safety considerations of staff and the public for all phases.

Legal and Regulatory Requirements

At all phases of reopening, compliance with the requirements of all applicable legislation and associated regulations will be required.

User Focused Service Delivery

The focus will be on the acknowledgement, appreciation, and protection of the users of our spaces, programs, and services. The reopening of a space, program or service will be based on the Township's ability to appropriately and sustainably resource or staff it.

Adapt, Evolve and Innovate

Procedures and approaches will be revisited and evaluated, following the lead of the Province and SMDHU. Where appropriate, we will consider fresh approaches to adapt to the new and changing reality. We will embrace positive change.

Communicate and Collaborate

Information sharing will be promoted to ensure we are able to assess and adapt to a continuously evolving situation. We will work together to ensure reopening is unified and consistent and consider how decisions and actions impact other service providers.

Phase 1: Protect and Support (March – April)

Municipal operations deemed essential and permitted to operate following strict emergency orders.

Spaces, Programs and Services:

- No gathering allowed with people outside the household;
- **Municipal facilities** closed to the public;
- **Programs** and events postponed and under review;
- **Outdoor spaces** and amenities including parks, boat launches and outdoor sports fields closed;
- **Township Office** (enhanced cleaning and nonemployee access protocols): Leadership determined which staff and services must occur onsite, as well as how work areas will ensure 2 metre (6 feet) distance between staff. Where this was not possible, Leadership identified and implemented administrative controls (see Appendix B) to ensure physical distancing. (12 FT staff deployed in office; 13 staff working remotely; 19 staff on rotation);
- Modified work structures, smaller teams including Public Works crews;
- Building and Fire Safety Inspections on hold;
- **Library** closed;
- Committee/Council meetings on hold;
- Appendix B outlines health and safety measures to protect staff;
- **Fire** rating set to high and no burning permits or fireworks permits allowed; and
- No new building permits issued

Digital Services

- Equipping staff with technology to work remotely;
- Investigating electronic meeting software \;
- Staff Training (Fire) provided electronically via web portal; and
- Enhanced communications.

Phase 2: Restart, Stage 1 (April – May)

Provincial loosening of public health measures begins. The restart phase is broken down into three stages, which will be strategic and guided by public health measures.

Spaces, Programs and Services:

- Gathering restrictions – up to 5 people;
- All **municipal facilities** closed to the public;
- **Swim Program** and events cancelled;
- **Outdoor spaces** and amenities including parks, boat launches and outdoor sportsfields open subject to Provincial Regulations and Orders;
- **Township Office** (enhanced cleaning and nonemployee access protocols): Leadership determined which staff and services must occur onsite, as well as how work areas will ensure 2 metre (6 feet) distance between staff. Where this was not possible, Leadership identified and implemented administrative controls (see Appendix B) to ensure physical distancing. (12 FT staff deployed in office; 13 staff working remotely; 19 staff on rotation);
- Modified work structures, smaller teams including Public Works crews;
- Building and Fire Safety Inspections provided. Seasonal Septic Re-inspection Program occurs;
- **Library** offering curbside pickup program;
- Appropriate standard operating procedures for staff and Committee Chairs and the Mayor (when attending for Committee/Council meetings) to follow respecting social distancing and other measures of how to work safely in the Township Office;
- Appendix B outlines health and safety measures to protect staff;
- Fire burning permits offered via email with payment via phone; and
- New Fire Department procedures implemented for dealing with Covid positive patients including decontamination procedures and enhanced infection control procedures

Digital Services

- Most staff equipped with technology to work remotely;
- Electronic Council and Committee meetings implemented (Zoom software). As Council and Committee meetings closed to the public, alternative approaches to soliciting feedback employed;
- Digital procurement;
- Staff Training (Fire) provided electronically via web portal;
- Drop off and pick up service for permits/approvals; and
- Enhanced communications.

Phase 2: Restart, Stage 2 (June)

Stage 2 - Gatherings of more than ten people are allowed.

Spaces, Programs and Services:

- Gathering restrictions – up to 10 people;
- All **municipal facilities** remain closed to the public;
- **Township Office** – a temporary increase in the amount of staff onsite may be permitted to enable functions (ie holding of Council/Planning Committee meetings), as permitted by the Province;
- Leadership may continue to work at the office, only when necessary;
- Those staff who can, will be encouraged to continue to work from home;
- The rotation of staff in the office will continue and those in attendance will be encouraged to adhere to Township health and safety guidelines as well as those from their respective professional associations;
- Staff and Members of Council over the age of 70 or those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical conditions will continue to be encouraged to work from home;
- Internal and external meetings will continue to be held virtually, where possible;
- Appendix B outlines health and safety measures to protect staff;
- Prepare plans for **Township facilities** to be reopened, which includes the Township office, select community centres, arenas, Library etc. (Appendix C outlines health and safety measures to protect public users); and
- **Outdoor spaces** and amenities including parks, boat launches and outdoor sports fields open associated public washrooms open with enhanced cleaning protocols (subject to Provincial Regulations and Orders).

Digital Services

- Council meetings will continue electronically and remain closed to the public and alternative approaches to soliciting feedback will continue to be employed. Council Chamber seating will continue to be arranged to ensure 2 metre (6 feet) distance between Mayor/Committee Chair and staff; and
- Enhanced communications.

Phase 2: Restart, Stage 3

Movement through Stage 3 will be phased and strategic, guided by Provincial loosening of public health measures.

Spaces, Programs and Services:

- **Township Office** - continue to encourage staff, who can, to work from home;
- The amount of staff onsite will be determined by the size of group gatherings, as determined by the Province of Ontario;
- Resume Council meetings at the Township Office/Port Carling Memorial Community Centre with Council seating arranged to ensure 2 metre (6 feet) distance between Council members and staff. If this is not possible, consideration will be made to support alternative formats (e.g., some Council members in-person and others virtual, depending on applicable legislation). This includes allowing public attendance at Council meetings, committee meetings, and meetings with external partners;
- Begin evaluation of post Covid-19 **Township Office** space optimization needs;
- Reopen select **Township facilities**, which includes select community centres, arenas, Library etc.;
- As larger public gatherings are permitted, enable rental of **Outdoor spaces** such as parks subject to appropriate protocols, associated public washrooms open with enhanced cleaning protocols.
- Appendix B outlines health and safety measures to protect staff; and
- Appendix C outlines health and safety measures to protect public users

Digital Services

- Continue with the use of digital services and electronic meetings as necessary and permitted; and
- Enhanced communications.

Phase 3: Recover

Post Covid-19 pandemic - Provincial restrictions are lifted

Spaces, Programs and Services:

- Reopen all **Township facilities**, which includes community centres, arenas, Library etc.;
- Resume Council meetings at the **Township Office/Port Carling Memorial Community Centre**;
- **Township Office** begin preparations to implement post Covid-19 Township Office space optimization needs recommendations;
- All **Outdoor spaces and amenities** open; and
- Resume programs and services as resourced in the approved 2021 Budget.

Digital Services

- Continue with the use of digital services and electronic meetings as necessary and permitted; and
- Updated communications protocols.

Appendix A: Health & Safety Considerations for all Phases

Passive/Active Screening

Passive screening posted at every Township facility, or signage prompting people to answer a series of questions related to COVID-19, will prompt each person accessing Township facilities to pre-screen for symptoms of COVID-19.

- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Visitor Signage](#)
- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Self Assessment](#)

Active Screening of contractors and visitors

Personal Hygiene

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- [SMDHU proper hand washing sign](#)
- [SMDHU proper hand sanitizing sign](#)

Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing means keeping distance from one another and limiting activities outside the home.

When outside your home, it means staying at least 2 metres (or 6 feet) away from other people whenever possible.

- [Public Health Ontario Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\) Physical Distancing Factsheet](#)
- [SMDHU's Physical Distancing Elevator Tips Sign](#)

Where feasible, the Township will take all reasonable actions to promote physical distancing of staff and residents. Examples include:

- Temporary markers at Township facilities where patrons could need to line-up (i.e., Town Hall, & Library locations)
- Reconfiguring office space
- Modifying work hours, rotating shifts onsite

Where physical distancing is not possible, the recommendations of the Province and the SMDHU will be followed.

Appendix B: Health and Safety Controls for Staff

This list will be updated as additional measures are identified.

1. Increased cleaning and sanitization, as well as hand sanitizer stations and handwashing signage
2. Space planning of workstations to ensure physical distancing
3. Determining facility entrances and exits
4. One-way traffic flow plans to reduce interaction in hallways and stairwells
5. Written infection prevention and control procedures for increased cleaning and disinfection
6. Installation of physical barriers (i.e., sneeze guards) at customer service areas
7. Installation of passive screening signage of all entrances and exits
8. Create and use booking systems to avoid crowding for certain facilities/uses
9. Increased workplace inspections
10. Actively screening external partners prior to meeting

Cleaning and Disinfecting

In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty. Examples include doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, counters, handrails, accessible door push buttons, touch screens and keypads.

- [Public Health Ontario Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
- [Health Canada Hard Surface Disinfectants and Hand Sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces](#)

Staff should use disposable gloves when cleaning surfaces. Staff will receive information (Safe Work Practices), regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements, including training for putting on and taking of PPE.

Education and Training

Staff will receive timely updates regarding COVID-19 and training to perform their duties.

Handling of money

Electronic payment devices are preferred. If you must handle money, always ensure regular handwashing, and have minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer readily available. Do not touch your face after handling money. Ensure that hand hygiene supplies are available for both patrons and staff at the point of purchase.

Receiving Packages and Mail

IHSA's [Guidance on handling and receiving packages \(all persons at work or at home\) during COVID-19](#)

Vehicle Sharing

When staff are required to share vehicles, the Safe Work Practices will apply (Infectious Disease Safe Work Practices for Parks and Site Visits).

Personal Protective Equipment

When physical distancing cannot be maintained, staff must wear a mask.

[Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development COVID-19 and Workplace Health and Safety](#)

Public Health Ontario [When and How to Wear a Mask Recommendations for the General Public](#)

[Ministry of Health's poster about face coverings](#)

[Public Health Ontario How to Hand Wash Video](#) [Public Health Ontario How to Hand Sanitize Video](#) [Public Health Ontario Putting on Gloves Video](#) [Public Health Ontario Taking Off Gloves Video](#) [Public Health Ontario Putting on a Mask Video](#)

Appendix C: Health & Safety Measures to Protect Public Users

This list will be updated as additional measures are identified.

Outdoor Spaces and Amenities

1. Facilities will have hand washing stations or hand sanitizer, garbage cans, public health signage (i.e., hygiene, physical distancing).
2. Surfaces (i.e., benches, garbage can handle, mooring points, and dock railing) will be cleaned and disinfected twice per day.
3. If public washrooms cannot be monitored, cleaned, and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty, they will remain closed.

Community Facilities

1. Increased cleaning and sanitization, as well as hand sanitizer stations and handwashing signage.
2. Determining facility entrances and exits, one-way traffic flow.
3. Written infection prevention and control procedures for increased cleaning and disinfection by facility staff.
4. Installation of physical barriers (i.e., sneeze guards) and floor markers at customer service areas
5. Determining facility entrances and exits, one-way traffic flow.
6. Installation of passive screening signage of all entrances and exits.

Administrative Facilities

1. Markings to indicate traffic flow and physical distancing for patrons.
2. Passive screening.
3. Hand sanitizer is available at all entrances and other frequently used areas.
4. High touch surfaces such as door handles, accessible door push buttons, railings will be cleaned and sanitized on an increased schedule.

Use of Public Washrooms

SMDHU's [Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms](#)