

Ministry of Health

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May 19, 2020
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May 19, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Health Chairs
Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health
President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Chief Administrative Officers and Clerks of Ontario's 444 Municipalities

RE: Amendments to permit the opening of some outdoor recreational amenities

Earlier today, the government announced that it amended Ontario Regulation 104/20 made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act - Closure of Outdoor Recreational Amenities*. These amendments will come into effect on May 19, 2020 and will allow the opening of the following amenities:

- Outdoor sports facilities and multi-use fields (including baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and frisbee golf locations, tennis, platform tennis, table tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, BMX parks, and skate parks);
- Off-leash dog areas; and
- Outdoor picnic sites, benches and shelters in park and recreational areas.

Any person who uses the above amenities must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any other person using the amenity (unless they are part of the same household).

Refer to <https://files.ontario.ca/solgen-oic-amend-104-20.pdf> for details.

With these changes, the existing emergency order will maintain the closure of all outdoor playgrounds, play structures and equipment and portions of park and recreational areas containing outdoor fitness equipment. It will also include the continued closure of outdoor swimming pools and other similar amenities, such as pools, whirlpools and spas, splash pads, spray pads, wading pools, and water slides and all communal facilities intended to be used by persons using outdoor sports amenities (unless they are permitted to be used under [O. Reg. 82/20 made under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act- Closure of Places of Non-Essential Businesses](#)).

The COVID-19 Public Health Measures Table has been consulted on these changes and are supportive of the opening of these amenities at this time.

We recognize that owners of amenities, including municipalities, may need additional time to prepare for their opening and may choose to restrict access until they deem appropriate. Amenities should not be made available for public use until it is safe to do so.

I have attached a set of Qs and As that provides additional information for local public health units and municipalities to support the safe implementation of these changes.

Please continue to communicate the importance of public health measures such as physical distancing, handwashing, and staying home when ill. They will be critical for keeping Ontarians safe as we continue to respond to this pandemic in Ontario.

If you have any questions please contact Chris Harold, A/Manager, Integrated Strategy and Policy Coordination, at chris.harold@ontario.ca, or Colleen Kiel, Director, Strategy and Planning at colleen.kiel@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your continued efforts.

Yours truly,



David C. Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc: Dr. David McKeown, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Alison Blair, ADM, Emergency Health Services and Public Health Modernization Lead

Ministry of Health

Qs and As for Medical Officers of Health and Municipal Chief Administrative Officers and Clerks — Opening Some Outdoor Recreational Amenities

Ontario amended O. Reg. 104/20: Emergency Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* — Closure of Outdoor Recreational Amenities to permit the opening of some outdoor recreational amenities starting May 19, 2020.

Q. What amenities can be opened?

A. The following outdoor recreational amenities can be opened as early as May 19, 2020:

- Outdoor sports facilities and multi-use fields (including baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and frisbee golf locations, tennis, platform tennis, table tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, BMX parks, and skate parks)
- Off-leash dog areas
- Outdoor picnic sites, benches and shelters in park and recreational areas

Individuals using these amenities, except for members of the same household, are required to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres or six feet.

Municipalities should only open these amenities when it is safe to do so.

Q. What, if any, amenities are required to remain closed?

A. At this time, the following outdoor amenities will remain closed:

- Playgrounds, play structures and equipment;
- Fitness equipment;
- Public swimming pools, splash pads and similar outdoor water facilities; and
- Communal facilities intended to be used by persons using outdoor sports amenities, except to the extent they provide access to a washroom or a portion of the facility that used to provide first aid in accordance with O. Reg. 82/20 made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*- Closure of Places of Non-Essential Businesses.

Q. Should washrooms be opened?

A. A municipality may choose to open washrooms in some or all of their outdoor amenities (i.e., parks).

If opened, individuals should physically distance, limit contact with surfaces as much as possible and wash their hands.

Q. Can the newly opened amenities be used to play sports?

A. Individuals may use outdoor sports facilities and multi-use fields for non-team sports, such as walking, running, biking, skateboarding, frisbee, kicking a ball, and low contact racquet sports like tennis, badminton, pickleball and ping pong.

Individuals who use the opened amenities for this purpose are required to physically distance unless they are members of the same household.

Individuals are not permitted to play team sports, such as soccer or baseball, even on fields intended for this purpose unless they are members of the same household.

Q. Can people use the newly opened amenities for gatherings and events?

As per O. Reg. 52/20: Emergency Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act – Organized Public Events, Certain Gatherings, individuals are not permitted to have gatherings or events with more than five people.

Individuals using the newly opened amenities are required to physically distance unless they are members of the same household.

Q. How can individuals stay safe while using outdoor recreational amenities?

A. Everyone using these outdoor recreational amenities is required to physically distance from anyone who is not in their household. This means staying 2 metres or 6 feet away from other people.

If an individual arrives at an amenity, such as an off-leash dog area, sports field or picnic area, that is crowded, they should wait until there is enough space to physically distance or return at another time.

Individuals should also use hand sanitizer to clean your hands while out, wash your hands as soon as you get home, and stay home if ill.