



COVID-19 Business Reopening Toolkit

Introduction

As Ontario begins to reopen the economy, we encourage all Ottawa businesses to review the information in this Business Reopening Toolkit. This document has been prepared by the City of Ottawa, in consultation with Ottawa Public Health. It is intended to provide guidance to businesses to prepare for safe reopening, subject to direction from the Province of Ontario, and should not be construed as legal advice or to replace specific instructions that may be issued by Ottawa Public Health or the Province.

As COVID-19 evolves, please visit ottawapublichealth.ca/coronavirus for the latest information.



Businesses are the backbone of our community and it is critical that we have the supports in place to help you succeed. Together with Councillors Eli El-Chantiry and Laura Dudas and our Economic Partners Task Force, the City is pleased to be helping the recovery efforts by providing this roadmap for you to reopen in a way that is good for business while ensuring the safety of employees, clients and customers.

Jim Watson, Mayor of Ottawa



Thank you to Ottawa businesses for all your efforts to date. Getting people back to work safely is a priority. You ARE making a difference in our community. We all need to keep introducing physical distancing into our work processes, so that we can do our best to avoid a resurgence of infection as we move forward with relaxing current restrictions. Stay updated on the latest guidance to help keep yourselves, your employees, and our community healthy and safe.

Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health





Getting Started

Determine if your business sector has been [approved to reopen](#) and identify any applicable restrictions. For additional information on impacts to your business or employment, read the [frequently asked questions](#) on the Government of Ontario website or call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line at [1-888-444-3659](tel:1-888-444-3659).



Prepare your Business

1. Develop a contingency and business continuity plan (Are you prepared for absenteeism? Do you have a plan for maintaining cash flow following reopening?).
2. Evaluate the demand for your products and services in the short/medium term.
3. Assess IT and POS systems and support for evolving work requirements.
4. Ensure contactless payment methods are available (debit, credit card, e-transfer).



Prepare your Workforce

1. Identify who will return to work, prepare a staff schedule and notify employees.
2. Consider assigning employees at higher risk (older adults and those with underlying medical conditions) to duties that allow them to work from home or minimize their contact with clients/customers and other employees (e.g., managing inventory rather than working as a cashier, managing administrative needs through telework).
3. Encourage employees to not come to work if they have [symptoms of COVID-19](#). Employees should complete a health screening questionnaire before each work shift. See sample screening form [here](#). If employees develop symptoms while at work, they should notify their supervisor and return home. Employees with symptoms should check the [Ottawa Public Health website](#) for the latest guidance on next steps.
4. Identify and implement return to work guidelines so employees know what measures they need to take before returning to work after illness (completion of self-isolation, symptom free period, etc.). Further information on self-isolation expectations is available on the [Ottawa Public Health website](#).

5. Circulate health and safety information, and ensure employees are trained on new business protocols (space reconfigurations, plexiglass shields, etc.) as well as the use and requirements for protective equipment such as non-medical masks (i.e. cloth masks) and gloves.
6. Identify back-up personnel for key business operations in case employees fall ill and/or are unable to perform their responsibilities. Specifically, identify back-up personnel that can be authorized to make decisions in case of absenteeism.
7. Consider developing or modifying flexible and special leave policies for employees during the crisis (e.g., giving advances on future sick leave or allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other) and provide that information to your employees.
8. Request that employees identify whether they work at more than one job. This will support case and contact management by public health professionals if necessary.



Prepare your Workplace

1. Reconfigure gathering and lobby areas to allow for at least two metres of separation between all employees and between customers.
2. Place posters at the entrance of the workplace to ensure clients/customers do not enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms. If you provide one-on-one service, consider screening clients/customers over the phone prior to arrival.
3. Ensure **appropriate signage** is in place to instruct clients/customers and employees on health and safety best practices.
4. Install plexiglass shields (see next section), non-touch lined waste disposal receptacles, as well as disinfectant tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers in multiple, prominent locations around the workplace. This includes at entrances and exits for clients/customers.
5. Provide portable hand sanitizer bottles to employees at their workstations if they interact directly with clients/customers.
6. Separate entrances and exits and use stanchions to manage line-ups to avoid overcrowding in the store. Encourage client/customer distancing while in line.
7. Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to employees and/or clients/customers.
8. Ensure that all equipment, and particularly water systems and features, are safe to use after a prolonged workplace shutdown.



Create a Physical Distancing Plan

1. Develop guidelines for clients/customers and employees to maintain a distance of at least two metres from one another. If this is not possible, limit the length of interactions and install a plexiglass shield. The use of non-medical masks (i.e. cloth masks) is also recommended for situations where physical distancing is difficult to maintain at all times.
2. Identify how non-medical masks (i.e. cloth masks) will be encouraged, provided and/or enforced with employees and clients/customers when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
3. Implement alternative work arrangements for employees, including flexible hours, staggered start times and teleworking.
4. Explore delivering services remotely.
5. Install signage, floor decals, etc. to help ensure adherence to physical distancing guidelines, both inside and outside the store (e.g., place or paint markings on the floor where customers can load items while the cashier is scanning to maintain enough space between the customer and the checkout clerk).
6. To help reduce the amount of time customers spend in-store, consider placing frequently purchased goods close to the entrance and checkout lines. Offer pre-packaged bundles of common products so customers can grab and go more quickly.
7. Make all aisles one-way with clear waymarks on the ground noting the flow of traffic, and use street traffic signs (e.g., do not enter, yield, one-way) to increase adherence.
8. Where possible, implement contactless delivery or curbside pick-up.
9. Restrict or consider limiting any non-essential visitors, volunteers and activities involving external groups or organizations in the workplace.
10. Restrict the number of employees in shared spaces, including kitchens and break rooms, to maintain at least two metres between everyone.



Reduce Touch Points and Increase Cleaning

1. Develop a thorough [cleaning and disinfection plan](#) for common areas, washrooms, sales areas, staff rooms and employee workstations.
2. Establish community safety measures such as public handwashing stations.

3. Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment or supplies. Disinfect any shared items between use or customer.
4. Ensure frequent and regular cleaning of workspaces, with particular focus on high touch surfaces (doorknobs, photocopiers, AV equipment, etc).
5. Limit in-person meetings and replace with video or conference calls.



Prepare your Supply Chain

1. Identify core products and services.
2. Engage with critical suppliers to confirm availability of inventory and supplies.
3. Confirm enough inventory and supplies on-site (including necessary protective equipment).
4. Coordinate delivery schedules to reduce the number of possible interactions between suppliers.
5. Conduct end-to-end supply chain risk assessments and prioritize critical focus areas.
6. Develop contingency plans with a diversified supplier network.



Communicate with Confidence

1. Stay informed and access up-to-date information on the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health, the Government of Ontario and Ontario Public Health websites.
2. Maintain up-to-date contact information for all employees, suppliers, service providers and lenders.
3. Keep your clients/customers informed that your business is still open, when it will re-open, or if your business hours have changed. Let them know what core services you still offer; this can be through email, business website, social media or mail. If clients/customers don't hear anything from you, they may assume you are closed. Be sure to update any business listings on third party websites.
4. Inform your employees about any changes you are making to your business.

5. Communicate transparently and regularly with clients/customers, employees, suppliers and lenders.
6. Identify whether clients/customers and suppliers have been affected by the pandemic and how this may impact your business.
7. Consider developing a survey to solicit feedback from employees, and clients/customers on changes to your business as a result of COVID-19. Do these changes meet their needs and expectations for a safe work/shopping experience?
8. Exchange ideas and best practices with other local businesses. Communicate with area business associations, including *Regroupement des gens d'affaires*, Ottawa Board of Trade, Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas, Ottawa Tourism, Invest Ottawa, Ottawa Festival Network, Ottawa Film Office and Ottawa Music Industry Coalition to help inform ongoing recovery efforts and support community resilience.
9. Remind employees to take steps to protect fellow employees and clients/customers.



Signage and Resources

[Know the Facts: About Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

Poster: [Physical Distancing](#)

Poster: [Putting On and Taking Off Non-Medical Masks](#)

Poster: [Practice Physical Distancing](#)

Factsheet: [Physical Distancing](#)

[How to Handwash](#)

[How to Use Alcohol-based Hand Rub](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

Signage: [Elevator Etiquette](#)

[Employee Self-screening Questionnaire](#)



Financial Assistance

1. Do you qualify for **financial assistance from the government** and, if so, have you applied for it?



Sector Specific Information

For further information on specific guidelines, considerations, and updates for the following sectors:

- Restaurants and food services
- Construction
- Retail
- Arts and culture, festivals and events
- Manufacturing
- Office
- Healthcare providers and personal services
- Agriculture
- Outdoor recreation

Please visit ottawa.ca/business toolkit