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Date: January 3, 2022
To: Parishes, priests and deacons
From: Fr. Dan Van Delst, Chancellor
Re: Province of Ontario – New restrictions – January 5, 2022

(Modifications are in green.)

Introduction:

On January 3, 2022, the Province of Ontario announced a return to a modified Step 2 to reduce the spread of COVID that will take effect **starting January 5, 2022, at 12:01am** (until January 26, 2022). Among the changes it brings are:

- Indoor religious services are limited of 50% of capacity and outdoor services are to maintain physical distancing of two metres.
- Pastors must make sure that all parish work is conducted remotely, unless the nature of the work requires workers to be on-site at the workplace.
- Indoor meeting and event spaces, such as banquet halls and conference/convention centres, **are to be closed, with limited exceptions.**
- Outdoor meeting and event facilities are limited to 10 people per table, patrons must remain seated and no dancing or singing.
- Informal social gatherings are limited to **5 people indoors and 10 people outdoors.**

Regulations by Type of Gathering or Facility:

1. Religious services (include Mass, baptisms, weddings and funerals):

In modified Step 2 (**effective January 5, 2022**): Indoor and outdoor gatherings are permitted with capacity limited to permit physical distancing of 2 metres. Parishes are strongly encouraged to continue livestream Masses during the Provincial Emergency. All COVID-19 protocols need to be observed including physical distancing and compliance with rules on masks (face coverings). The collecting of names and contact information is still required.

Archbishop Marcel requests that religious services (including Mass, baptisms, weddings and funerals) continue to require physical distancing. We do not require proof of vaccination. This satisfies the requirement from Ottawa Public Health to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres and the **Province of Ontario limit of 50% of capacity for indoor services and two metres physical distancing for outdoor services.**

Congregational singing is not allowed at this time as per the WorshipSafe Guidelines (August 6, 2021). The allowance from November 10 is removed. A cantor or choir is required to abide by the WorshipSafe Guidelines (August 6, 2021) as well.

Ottawa Public Health requires that places of worship post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits according to this order (50% of total capacity).

Currently Ottawa Public Health gives the following operational guidance regarding cleaning and disinfecting (last updated December 6, 2021):

- Keeping facilities safe and clean for staff, volunteers, and attendees continues to be an important component of the COVID-19 response. Frequent hand washing and readily available hand hygiene supplies are a key control measure for all in attendance.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched and common surfaces as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
 - Places of Worship may wish to consider cleaning high touch-surfaces at least twice a day (when in use), following each use, and/or after every religious service (e.g., distinct groups of worshippers)
- Surfaces most likely to become contaminated include, but are not limited to pews, doorknobs, railings, elevator buttons, water fountain/cooler knobs, light switches, toilet and faucet handles, ceremonial objects, electronic devices, and tabletops.

2. Indoor Meeting and Event spaces (i.e. parish halls):

In Step 2 (effective January 5, 2022): **Indoor meeting or events spaces are closed, with limited exceptions.**

The legal requirements for meeting and event facilities may be found in sections 2-4 of Schedule 1 of the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200263>.

3. Outdoor Meeting and Event spaces:

In Step 2 (effective January 5, 2022): Outdoor gatherings or meetings are permitted.

All COVID-19 protocols need to be observed including physical distancing and compliance with rules on masks (face coverings). Province of Ontario directives require the following:

1. Comply with advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on cleaning or disinfecting.
2. Ottawa Public Health is limiting events to 50% of capacity.
3. The maximum capacity must be posted.
4. **Patrons must remain seated.**

5. A maximum of 10 people (6 people for Ottawa Public Health region) is allowed to sit at a table.
6. Ottawa Public Health requires patrons seated at different tables to be separated by a distance of at least two metres or some impermeable barrier.
7. The person responsible for the facility must record the name and contact information of every member of the public who attends a meeting or event and must actively screen individuals. The [COVID-19 customer screening tool](#) may be used to meet this requirement.
8. If covered (i.e., roof, tent, canopy, etc.), an outdoor dining area must have at least two full sides of the dining area or one full side and the roof open and unobstructed.
9. The facility must have a safety plan available that outlines how it will meet public health and workplace safety measures.
10. No dancing or singing.
11. Limited hours for the sale, service and consumption of liquor.

The legal requirements for meeting and event facilities may be found in sections 2-4 of Schedule 1 of the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200263>.

4. Indoor Meetings and Gatherings:

In Step 2 (effective January 5, 2022): **Maximum 5 people for indoors** meetings and gatherings. COVID-19 protocols need to be observed including physical distancing and compliance with rules on face coverings. The collecting of names and contact information is required.

Indoor meetings and gatherings with 6 or more people are not permitted at this time.

5. Outdoor Meetings and Gatherings:

In Step 2 (effective January 5, 2022): **maximum 10 people for outdoor** meetings and gatherings. COVID-19 protocols need to be observed including physical distancing and compliance with rules on face coverings. The collecting of names and contact information is required.

Outdoor meetings and gatherings with 11 or more people must follow all the rules of section 3 above.

6. Parish offices (effective January 5, 2022): Pastors are to limit parish staff required to work on-site according to the directive: *Each person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall ensure that any person who performs work for the business or organization conducts their work remotely, unless the nature of their work requires them to be on-site at the workplace* (2.1 of Ontario Regulation 263/20).

Should you have any questions, please contact the Chancery.
Thank you for your continued cooperation during these challenging days.