

DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES



Roadmap to Re-open: From the Bishop's Office

On Thursday, May 20th, the Government of Ontario issued a "Roadmap to Reopen." Here is a link to a Backgrounder from the Office of the Premier that explains this three-step plan that seems to be based on vaccination rates rather than the number of daily infections.

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en>

The following points are of interest to places of worship and have been provided by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops. It seems that in step one, if we hold religious services outside there is no limit to attendance, provided there can be the prescribed distancing.

Before the implementation of the "Roadmap to Reopen", current measures for places of worship (limit of 10 both inside and outside) remain in place.

Step 1 of the "Roadmap to Reopen" is expected to be introduced the week of June 14. Each step will last a minimum of 21 days – movement to the next step is also impacted by the number of positive Covid-19 cases in the province, demand on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in hospitals as well as the vaccination rate for Ontarians.

Step 1 – limits indoor gatherings at places of worship to the current hard cap of 10 people. In Step 1, outdoor religious services may be conducted without limits as long as 2 m distancing is maintained.

Step 2 – first week of July at the earliest – places of worship are permitted 15% capacity.

Step 3 – at least 21 days following the start of Step 2 – places of worship are permitted "larger indoor services, rites or ceremonies" – no specific number or percentage is provided.

According to the government's tentative projections, places of worship may be open to full capacity as of August 16, 2021.

This continues to be a challenging time for everyone. However, the situation seems to be improving daily and we can proceed with a sense of hope that an end to this devastating pandemic is in sight. Please continue to pray for those we have lost to COVID, those who are suffering from COVID, and all those whose personal and professional lives have been gravely impacted by COVID.

