

OPEN NIAGARA

Open Niagara is Niagara Region's Recovery Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Open Niagara is focused on the overall goal of continuing to protect the health and safety of Niagara residents and Regional staff and to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is designed to ensure a holistic, coordinated and phased strategy to re-opening Regional facilities, to guarantee the delivery of essential community and public health services and support the re-opening of the economy.

Open Niagara has two components: the internal *Organizational Plan* and the external *Economic Recovery Plan*. The two plans are being developed in tandem and are linked together. The Economic Recovery Plan is led by the Economic Rapid Response Team (a collaboration of all the economic development offices in Niagara) and in consultation with local stakeholders.

The Organizational Plan outline guidelines to ensure a coordinated approach between all Regional departments and levels of governments is achieved in order to ensure timely communication, decisions and actions to protect the safety and wellbeing of Niagara residents and Regional staff who deliver Regional services.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started Niagara Region has taken measures to adapt to the new circumstances and continue to provide essential services. Work has continued, albeit in some cases, in a different way and a focus will be placed on the innovative practices and lessons learned which where appropriate will be incorporated into the Plan going forward.

Re-opening Framework

Alignment with the Province of Ontario's Re-opening Framework

Open Niagara will be implemented in alignment with the Ontario Government's framework to re-open the Province. [Reopening Ontario after COVID-19](#)

Open Niagara follows the same phased approach as the Provincial framework and will

take guidance from the Province as we enter into each of the three pandemic recovery stages. However, it will also take advice from our Medical Officer of Health in Niagara. Depending on our circumstances, this could result in the Region moving through the phases of reopening at a different speed to the Province.

Open Niagara is adaptable

The current situation in response to COVID-19 is constantly changing as the circumstances of the pandemic evolve. It is also affected by regular announcements from both the Provincial and Federal governments. *Open Niagara* will be continually revised to ensure it is reflecting the latest information.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Niagara Region's schedule to responsibly lift public health measures and restart the economy will be guided by the advice of the Province of Ontario and the Chief Medical Officer of Health and regional public health officials. It will be based on fundamental guiding principles which must be applied consistently throughout the recovery process:

1. Protection of Public Health

We will ensure the health of Niagara residents and Regional staff continues to be our highest priority. We will provide opportunities to maintain safe physical distance from others and follow good public health and occupational safety practices while reopening Regional facilities and restarting programs and services. We will consider the health, economic and social effects on residents when determining the most suitable means to deliver services. We will work to ensure that emergency response, emergency management and other critical services remain able to address the challenges posed by COVID-19 and any other emergencies that may occur during this time.

2. Service to the Vulnerable Sector

We will continue providing support and services to support the most vulnerable residents in our community, and the staff who serve them. We will ensure that we consider equity, inclusion and diversity when considering our recovery.

3. Adaptation of Regional Facilities and Assets

We will consider a consistent approach in modifying or adapting facilities and assets in order to support Regional business and operations.

4. Community Priorities

We will consider the services that are most valued by the community.

5. Economic Recovery

We will develop an Economic Recovery Plan to support the re-opening of the economy and our local businesses.

We will prioritize those services, programs and activities that support the ongoing economic recovery of the community and generate revenue for the Region.

6. Health, Well-Being and Productivity

We will take a consistent approach in considering the health, well-being and productivity of employees when determining the most suitable location for them to do their best work.

7. Legal or Regulatory Requirements

We will consider whether a Regional service or activity supports a legal or regulatory obligation of the Region.

8. Resource Availability

We will consider the availability of resources such as staff, physical and financial resources, personal protective equipment and others.

9. Federal and Provincial Requirements

Niagara Region will follow the direction and requirements of the Federal and Provincial governments in the development and implementation of our recovery plans.

10. Business Efficiencies and Cost Considerations

We will consider the continuation of any new operational efficiencies or cost savings being realized. This includes consideration of any implementation of new innovation strategies.

OPEN NIAGARA PHASED RECOVERY

Open Niagara is aligned with the Province of Ontario's framework and includes three overarching phases [Province of Ontario's Reopening Framework](#).

Through each phase, the health and safety of Niagara residents and Regional staff will be the primary focus, continuing to balance the needs of the community, Regional Council and Regional business.

The Region will follow the lead of the Province of Ontario and take direction from the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, our local Medical Officer of Health and other public health officials. Advice from these professionals will determine the speed that we proceed through the phases of re-opening and will help to determine if health and safety measures need to be adjusted at any time. No dates are referenced for any of the phases. **We will continue to utilize Corporate approved Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) as we continue our response to the pandemic and move through recovery phases.**

Everyday actions to protect the health of residents and Regional staff – like physical distancing, frequent hand washing and staying home if you are sick – will continue through each phase.

Phase One – The Early Stages (Current Stage)

Phase One of Niagara's Recovery Plan is focused on delivering the highest priority Regional services in accordance with BCPs.

- All Regional facilities and offices remain closed to the public
- Limited staff in the workplace delivering high-priority services
- Limited staff in the workplace working alone or in small groups outdoors
- Many staff continue to work from home
- Staff who were redeployed to support COVID-19 emergency response efforts will continue in their temporary positions
- Restrictions on the number of people gathering to follow Provincial Orders
- Active or self-screening at all Regional facilities

Phase Two – Gradual Recovery

Phase Two is focused on safely expanding Regional services available to residents and physically returning more staff to work in accordance with BCPs

- Some Regional facilities and offices re-open to the public with measures to enable physical distancing and health screening upon entry
- Where required, staff will return to the workplace under enhanced health and safety guidelines with strict adherence to physical distancing, health screening upon entry, and restrictions on gatherings
- Many staff continue to work from home
- Staff who were redeployed to support COVID-19 emergency response efforts will continue in their temporary positions
- Restrictions on the number of people gathering to follow Provincial Orders
- Many Regional services are available both online and in person with enhanced health and safety measures in place for staff and residents accessing services at municipal facilities.

Phase Three – Our New Reality

Phase Three is our new reality. It is focused on continuing to deliver Regional services, in accordance with BCPs, in a safe and responsible manner while the risk of COVID-19 infection remains in our community. Phase Three will be lengthy. It will continue until a COVID-19 vaccine or other treatments are available and are in widespread use.

- Most Regional facilities and offices re-open to the public with measures to enable physical distancing and health screening upon entry
- More staff may return to the workplace under enhanced health and safety guidelines
- Many staff continue to work from home
- Staff who were redeployed to support COVID-19 emergency response efforts may continue in their temporary positions
- Relaxed restrictions on the number of people gathering to follow the Provincial Orders
- Many Regional services are available both online and in person with health and safety measures in place for staff and residents accessing services at Regional facilities

If required, Niagara Region is prepared to implement more stringent public health measures or move backwards in the phased approach in order to keep residents and staff safe. Some elements may move between phases faster than others based on advice from public health officials and the situation in Niagara.

Service Availability by Phase

Niagara Region delivers a wide range of services to the community. During the COVID-19 emergency, some of these services have continued, and some have continued on a modified basis. Some services were postponed or cancelled due to resourcing or other health and safety related concerns. Each Regional service is categorized under one of the following categories:

PROCEEDING – NO CHANGE:

Regional service is proceeding with no changes for residents or staff as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Services under this category are proceeding as they did prior to the COVID-19 emergency.

PROCEEDING – NEW MODEL:

Regional service is proceeding with no changes for residents, but the Region is delivering the service in a different way as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Services under this category are continuing, but staff may be working from home or doing their work in a different way, in accordance with enhanced health and safety guidelines.

MODIFIED:

Delivery of this Regional service has been modified as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Niagara Region is continuing to deliver some parts of this service, but residents may notice a changes to service levels or the way a service is delivered.

CANCELLED: This Regional service has been cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.

Where restart of a Regional service is completely dependent on an action from the Province of Ontario, this is noted as well.

The Region has used a risk-based approach to guide the decisions on the safe re-opening of Regional facilities and the restart of Regional services and programs. Each service was assessed individually to determine the type of interaction required to deliver it, and potential modifications that could be made to make the service safer.