



**Toronto Regional
Real Estate Board**

Professionals connecting people,
property and communities.



Open House

Guidance

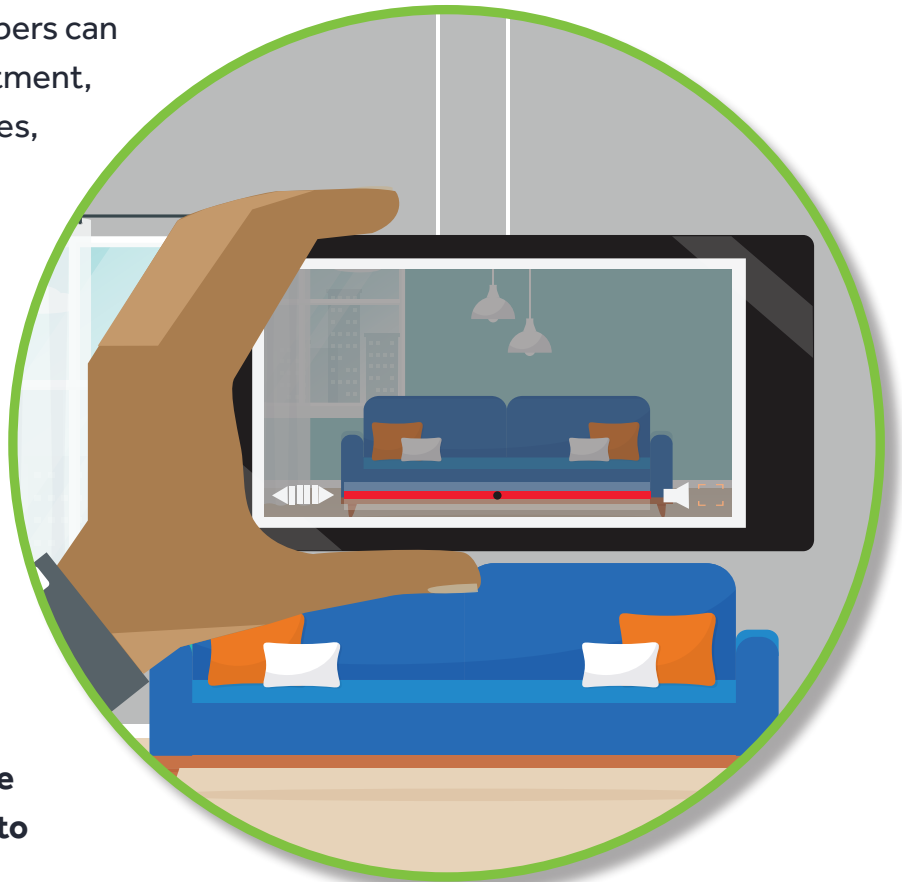
Members need to rethink their practices to protect themselves, consumers and communities from COVID-19.

It's not business as usual.

The Government of Ontario is lifting the province-wide ban on real estate in-person open houses starting July 16, 2021. It is important that Members continue to put the health and safety of your clients and communities first.

TRREB continues to strongly advise Members to continue to take advantage of virtual tools. Members can conduct in-person showings by appointment, following health and safety best practices, so you will still be able to provide your services to pre-qualified clients and complete transactions. It is suggested you limit showings to one family group in the property at a time. This will allow us as an industry to keep the real estate market moving and help consumers achieve their home ownership dreams.

Members are reminded that there are alternative online and virtual marketing opportunities for sellers that can easily be accessed by buyers. **TRREB has a live stream open house function available to Members for listings.** [View details.](#)



Use the 10 Best Practices Outlined Below

When the prohibition on in-person open houses is lifted, if it becomes necessary to host open houses, you can help ensure that you've assessed, prepared for, and prevented potential health risks to yourself, your clients, and consumers. These best practices are also applicable to in-person showings by appointment.

1. Consider Your Clients' Best Interests

When you offer or you are asked by a client to host an open house as part of marketing their property, it's important to discuss all the different risk factors (from the spread of COVID-19 to concerns from neighbours or tenants), as well as the precautions you will take to reduce such risks. Holding an open house may risk exposing you, your clients, attendees, and others to COVID-19. These risks can differ depending on whether a home is vacant, owner-occupied, tenant-occupied or a unit in a multi-tenanted building.

Only after assessing the risks and understanding the required precautions can your clients make an informed decision to hold an open house. If the decision is made to proceed, make sure you document your clients' agreement with your precautions, as well as any responsibilities they have agreed to before and after an open house.

Communicate the protocols you will be following to your clients and ensure they understand and agree to their role in sanitizing the property.

Remember, the brokerage determines the services they offer to clients.



2. Understand the Safety Protocols to Follow

Make sure you have a good understanding of the most up-to-date safety guidelines and protocols from the public health authorities as well as your brokerage's policies and procedures. These orders, guidelines and protocols will be the foundation for the protocols that you must develop and put in place before you resume holding open houses. These guidelines may change, for example, if Ontario experiences a second wave of COVID-19 cases, so it's important to monitor the situation as it evolves.

[Toronto Public Health](#) | [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) | [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

You can also view the **[TRREB Reopening Resources for Members and Brokerages](#)**.

3. Leverage Technology to Reduce In-Person Interactions

Take every opportunity to use technology to reduce in-person contact (e.g., virtual open houses and executing documents remotely). Let your clients know that you can provide real estate services and market their home effectively using the array of technological tools available. While not new, virtual viewings are now mainstream, have increased in popularity and have a much wider audience reach that we believe will continue. Statistics show that consumers using virtual tools are more likely to reach out to a REALTOR®. Moving forward, virtual open houses are going to be instrumental in how REALTORS® generate leads and sell homes.



4. Use Your Professional Judgement

Some of the safety guidelines and protocols issued by the health authorities require you to use your professional judgement.

One thing is certain, if you, your clients, or any consumer are displaying symptoms related to COVID-19, you cannot proceed in a way that may endanger others. You are obligated to refuse entry to the consumer, reschedule if the seller or tenant is displaying symptoms, or find someone to host on your behalf if you are showing symptoms. In some cases, it may not be possible to proceed with an open house altogether.



5. Anticipate and Respond to Community Concerns

You may hear concerns from others in the neighbourhoods where you host open houses. Whether on-line or in-person, be prepared to respond to concerns with professionalism and empathy. By communicating clearly about the precautions and safety protocols you are following, you can help members of the public understand that you are acting responsibly to protect their health and safety. Keep in mind that your actions can influence the public's perception of the entire real estate profession.

6. Limit Attendance and Manage Consumer Expectations

Try to limit open house attendees to serious buyers by leveraging technology first, and screening for qualifying consumers who:

- have already listed or sold their current home;
- are working with a REALTOR®;
- are prequalified for financing;
- have already viewed the property online through videos, 3-D renderings, etc.; and
- have already viewed the neighbourhood.

Whenever possible, encourage pre-registration and/or a schedule for open houses. Ask consumers to do the following before considering attending an open house:

- review the MLS® listing details/photos in full;
- review any floor plans, 3D renderings, videos or additional information;
- drive by and be familiar with the physical location of the property;
- ensure they are prequalified;
- bring their own masks and other personal protective equipment as required; and
- review the open house safety procedures, as provided by the open house host.

It is recommended that you post the open house safety protocols you develop on your website, share them on social media, include a link to them wherever you can so consumers know what to expect, and have them available at the open house.

Consider sign toppers on open house signs stating that open house safety protocols are in effect and a "take one box" explaining the protocols.

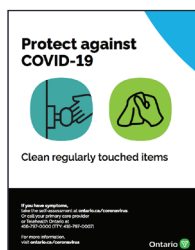
7. Plan in Advance

- Prepare the personal protective equipment you will need for yourself and any that you intend to provide to attendees.
- Require anyone entering the home to wear a mask, including other real estate professionals. Consider how you will communicate this to consumers ahead of the open house, and what you will do if a consumer refuses to wear a mask or doesn't have one. Consider having disposable masks available at every open house for this eventuality.

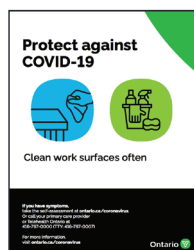


- Consider what cleaning protocols you may need to do during the open house and whether you will need extra time to ensure it is done.
- Consider if you will need assistance to manage physical distancing outside and inside the home.
- Use signage asking consumers:
 - not to enter if they have any COVID-19 symptoms, have been exposed to COVID-19 or have travelled outside of the province or country within the last 14 days;
 - to wash or sanitize their hands prior to entering the home;
 - to avoid using the washroom(s) in the home;
 - to wear masks in the home and in common areas for multi-tenanted properties; and
 - to observe physical distancing.

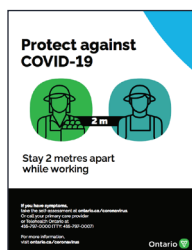
Some examples of signage you can print can be found here:



Clean regularly touched items



Clean work surfaces often



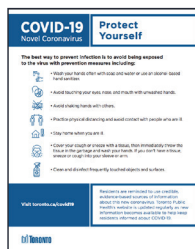
Stay 2 metres apart while working in an open house



Open doors and windows to let in more fresh air



Prevent the spread of infections



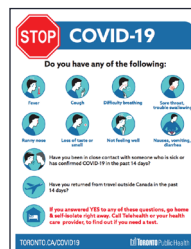
Protect yourself



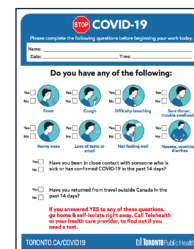
Why should I wear a cloth mask?



How should I wear a cloth mask?



Entrance screening



Staff screening

Plan and direct safe traffic flow to ensure physical distancing is maintained and possible. Consider:

- if there is an opportunity to provide an alternate exit to the entrance;
- if there are barriers to rooms; and
- taping the floor and/or posting signage informing consumers of the traffic flow through the home.

8. Keep Safety in Mind During the Open House or Showing and Limit the Number of People

- Confirm with the seller that the home has been cleaned and that common spaces are disinfected. This should include door handles, counters, light switches or anywhere someone may touch.
- Provide hand sanitizer/disinfectant at the door and recommend that everyone use it.
- Keep a list of everyone who has attended the property, including the date and time, in case contact tracing becomes necessary. Make sure they are aware of how their personal information is being collected/used and disclosed. In the event of an infection, you may be asked to provide the information to local public health authorities so they may investigate further. Note that, under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), this information can only be used for the purposes for which it was collected.

- Abide by the schedule you have in place, and encourage consumers to wait in their car or line up outside while keeping two metres away from other waiting consumers.
- If possible, set out markers/barriers to help ensure a two metre distance is kept between consumers.
- Ensure that all lights are on, all doors are open (including closets), and all areas a consumer may want to see are accessible.
- Limit the number of individuals allowed into a home at one time based on the size of the property. Have a plan to communicate this to consumers, and ensure they wait until they are invited to enter the home or the multi-tenanted property.
- It is suggested you limit open house viewings or showings to one family group in the property at a time.
- Remain two metres away from consumers during the showing.
- Don't shake consumers' hands or engage in physical contact.

9. Consider the Requirements of Multi-Tenanted Properties

- For multi-tenanted properties, discuss with the seller whether the corporation has any COVID-19 safety protocols to be aware of and incorporate these into your plan.
- Consider what cleaning protocols will be required for common areas and who will do them.
- Consider whether extra help is needed to manage entry to the building and other common areas.
- Encourage one-way flow with marked entrance and exits to multi-tenanted properties, where possible.
- Consider sharing the safety protocols you will be following with building occupants in multi-tenanted properties.
- Make hand sanitization available at high touchpoints, such as elevators and interior doors in common areas.
- Ensure physical distancing can be maintained between consumers in common areas and post limits during the open house for elevators and other common areas if not already limited by the property.

10. Safely Conclude the Open House

- Close and lock the door at the end of the showings.
- Where agreed upon with the seller in advance, leave the lights on and the interior doors as found, to minimize touchpoints in the home.
- Recommend to clients that they disinfect their home after open houses, especially commonly touched areas like doorknob and faucet handles, and explain the risks of not doing so.
- Disinfect lock boxes and keys on exiting the home.

TRREB continues to encourage all Members to follow the advice of public health authorities and exercise reasonable precautions as needed to ensure the safety of all Members and their clients.

The information provided in this document is not intended as legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. For further clarification, Members are strongly encouraged to seek legal advice or the assistance of their brokerage. The information presented is based on what is currently available. Due to frequent changes, we recommend that Members also check the government's website.