

Ontario Unveils Guiding Principles to Reopen the Province

News Release

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Premier and Ministers Commit to New Phased Approach for a Safe Restart and Recovery

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Office of the Premier

TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government released *A Framework for Reopening our Province*, which outlines the criteria Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts will use to advise the government on the loosening of emergency measures, as well as guiding principles for the safe, gradual reopening of businesses, services and public spaces. The framework also provides details of an outreach strategy, led by the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee, to help inform the restart of the provincial economy.

Details were provided by Premier Doug Ford, Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance, Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

"Our top priority remains protecting the health and safety of the people of Ontario and supporting our frontline heroes as we do everything in our power to contain and defeat this deadly virus," said Premier Ford. "At the same time, we are preparing for the responsible restart of our economy. This next phase of our response to COVID-19 is designed to help us map out what needs to be done, and when, to get us back on the road to recovery."

The government is planning a stage-by-stage approach to reopening the economy to ensure there are appropriate measures in place so workplaces can open safely. Public health officials will carefully monitor each stage for two to four weeks, as they assess the evolution of the COVID-19 outbreak to determine if it is necessary to change course to maintain public health.

- **Stage 1:** For businesses that were ordered to close or restrict operations, opening select workplaces that can immediately modify operations to meet public health guidance. Opening some outdoor spaces like parks and allowing for a greater number of individuals to attend some events. Hospitals would also begin to offer some non-urgent and scheduled surgeries, and other health care services.
- **Stage 2:** Opening more workplaces, based on risk assessments, which may include some service industries and additional office and retail workplaces. Some larger public gatherings would be allowed, and more outdoor spaces would open.
- **Stage 3:** Opening of all workplaces responsibly and further relaxing of restrictions on public gatherings.

Throughout each stage, continued protections for vulnerable populations must be in place, along with the continued practice of physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene, and significant mitigation plans to limit health risks.

"Recent public health indicators show us that we're beginning to turn a corner in the COVID-19 outbreak, while economic data, feedback from businesses and insights from our communities are outlining how we need to plan for economic recovery," said Minister Phillips. "Turning on an economy after an unprecedented shut-down is not as simple as flipping a switch. We need to plan this out carefully to ensure we do not spark a sudden outbreak, undo the progress we have made and put the safety of the public at risk."

To reopen the economy, the government will consider factors such as the risk of the spread of COVID-19 and the ability to implement protective measures to keep workplaces safe. The Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts will provide advice to the government about easing public health measures using a range of set criteria, including:

- A consistent two-to-four week decrease in the number of new daily COVID-19 cases;
- Sufficient acute and critical care capacity, including access to ventilators and ongoing availability of personal protective equipment;
- Approximately 90 per cent of new COVID-19 contacts are being reached by local public health officials within one day, with guidance and direction to contain community spread; and
- Ongoing testing of suspected COVID-19 cases, especially of vulnerable populations, to detect new outbreaks quickly.

"It is because of the collective efforts of all Ontarians to stay at home and stop the spread of COVID-19 that we are able to consider plans to move into the next phase of our battle against this virus," said Minister Elliott. "The Chief Medical Officer of Health has outlined some criteria he will use to advise government on when we may begin to slowly and safely ease public health measures and restart our economy. To be able to do so, we need everyone to continue their extraordinary efforts so that we can meet these thresholds and begin to move forward."

Supporting the next phases of [Ontario's Action Plan](#), the new Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee, chaired by Minister Phillips, will be consulting with key sectors in all regions to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the provincial economy and develop a plan to move forward. The government and Members of Provincial Parliament will lead discussions with business associations, chambers of commerce, municipal leaders, the postsecondary sector, corporate leaders, small business owners, community and social service providers, Indigenous partners, Franco-Ontarians, entrepreneurs and others.

The work of the committee will build on *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19*, the first phase of the government's \$17 billion response, that is delivering targeted relief for businesses and families across Ontario.

"The COVID-19 outbreak has had far-reaching economic impacts for businesses and communities across Ontario," said Minister Fedeli. "In the face of these challenges, businesses and individuals have stepped up to support our frontline workers, produce essential equipment and keep our supply chains moving. Our plan to carefully and methodically reopen Ontario's economy will ensure that businesses are supported on our path to renewed economic prosperity."

Additional Resources

- [Learn more about A Framework for Reopening our Province](#)
- [Learn more about the first phase of Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19.](#)
- [See how your organization can help fight COVID-19.](#)
- [Information and advice to help your business navigate the economy during COVID-19.](#)

Visit [Ontario's website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.