

NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Releases Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term

Gradual, cautious approach to manage COVID-19 now and moving forward

October 22, 2021

[Office of the Premier](#)

TORONTO — The Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has released [A Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term](#), which outlines the province's gradual approach to lifting remaining public health and workplace safety measures by March 2022. The plan will be guided by the ongoing assessment of key public health and health care indicators and supported by local or regional tailored responses to COVID-19.

"Thanks to our cautious and careful approach to re-opening, we are now in position to gradually lift all remaining public health measures over the coming months," said Premier Doug Ford. "This plan is built for the long term. It will guide us safely through the winter and out of this pandemic, while avoiding lockdowns and ensuring we don't lose the hard-fought gains we have made."

Ontario will slowly and incrementally lift [all remaining public health and workplace safety measures](#), including the provincial requirement for proof of vaccination and wearing of face coverings in indoor public settings, over the next six months. This phased approach will be guided by the ongoing assessment and monitoring of key public health and health care indicators, such as the identification of any new COVID-19 variants, increases in hospitalizations and ICU occupancy and rapid increases in transmission to ensure that public health and workplace safety measures are lifted safely.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, Ontario has taken a cautious approach to reopening to protect the health and safety of Ontarians," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Our plan will ensure we replicate this success and take a gradual approach that will protect our health system capacity, prevent widespread closures, keep our schools open and support the province's economic recovery."

In the absence of concerning trends, public health and workplace safety measures will be lifted based on the proposed following milestones:

October 25, 2021

In response to continued improvements to key indicators, including ongoing stability in the province's hospitals, effective October 25, 2021 at 12:01 a.m., Ontario will lift capacity limits, including physical distancing requirements, in the vast majority of settings where proof of vaccination are required, such as restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments; indoor areas of sports and recreational facilities such as gyms and where personal physical fitness trainers provide instruction; casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments; and indoor meeting and event spaces. Limits will also be lifted in certain outdoor settings.

At this time, the government will also allow other settings to lift capacity limits and physical distancing requirements if they choose to require proof of vaccination, including:

- Personal care services (e.g., barber shops, salons, body art);
- Indoor areas of museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions;
- Indoor areas of amusement parks;
- Indoor areas of fairs, rural exhibitions, festivals;
- Indoor tour and guide services;
- Boat tours;
- Indoor areas of marinas and boating clubs;
- Indoor clubhouses at outdoor recreational amenities;
- Open house events provided by real estate agencies; and
- Indoor areas of photography studios and services.

Locations where a wedding, funeral or religious service, rite or ceremony takes place may also implement proof of vaccination requirements for services, rites, or ceremonies at the location.

This will not apply to settings where people receive medical care, food from grocery stores and medical supplies. In addition, the government intends to allow for greater capacity at organized public events such as Remembrance Day ceremonies and Santa Claus parades with more details coming in the near future.

November 15, 2021

The government intends to lift capacity limits in the remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required, including food or drink establishments with dance facilities (e.g., night clubs, wedding receptions in meeting/event spaces where there is dancing); strip clubs, bathhouses and sex clubs.

January 17, 2022

In the absence of concerning trends in public health and health care following the winter holiday months and after students returned to in-class learning, the province intends to begin gradually lifting capacity limits in settings where proof of vaccination is not required. The Chief Medical Officer of Health will also lift [CMOH directives](#) as appropriate.

Proof of vaccination requirements may also begin to be gradually lifted at this time, including for restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments, facilities used for sports and recreational facilities and casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments.

February 7, 2022

The government intends to lift proof of vaccination requirements in high-risk settings, including night clubs, strip clubs, and bathhouses and sex clubs.

March 28, 2022

At this time, it is intended that remaining public health and workplace safety measures will be lifted, including wearing face coverings in indoor public settings. Recommendations may be released for specific settings, if appropriate.

In addition, the provincial requirement for proof of vaccination will be lifted for all remaining settings, including meeting and event spaces, sporting events, concerts, theatres and cinemas, racing venues and commercial and film productions with studio audiences.

To manage COVID-19 over the long-term, local and regional responses by public health units will be deployed based on local context and conditions. Public health measures that may be applied locally could include reintroducing capacity limits and/or physical distancing, reducing gathering limits and adding settings where proof of vaccination is required, among others. Public health measures would be implemented provincially in exceptional circumstances, such as when the province's health system capacity is at risk of becoming overwhelmed or if a vaccine resistant COVID-19 variant is identified in the province.

"We are now in a position where we can see the proposed plan for lifting the remaining public health and workplace safety measures in Ontario," said Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health. "The months ahead will require continued vigilance, as we don't want to cause anymore unnecessary disruption to people's everyday lives. We must continue to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities by following the public health measures in place and by vaccinating those who have not yet received their shots. Ontario has the infrastructure in place to manage outbreaks, including a high-volume capacity for testing, and people to perform fast and effective case and contact management when needed."

Quick Facts

- The powers to extend and amend orders under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020* are currently in effect until December 1, 2021, and Ontario intends to seek the Legislature's approval to extend these powers as authorized under the ROA in order to be able to maintain necessary public health and workplace measures until they are no longer needed.
- Well-functioning heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can help to disperse and remove respiratory droplets and aerosols that may contain viruses from indoor spaces. However, these tools must be used in conjunction with all other public health and workplace safety measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Local medical officers of health have the ability to issue advice, recommendations or instructions under the *Reopening Ontario Act (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (ROA)* as well as Section 22 orders under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, and municipalities may enact by-laws, to target specific transmission risks in the community.

- As of [September 22, 2021](#), Ontarians are required to be [fully vaccinated](#) with proof of vaccination along with ID to access certain public settings and facilities. The [enhanced vaccine certificate with official QR code](#) and the free, made-in-Ontario Verify Ontario app are now available for download, making it easier, more secure and convenient for individuals to provide proof of vaccination where required to do so.
- As of October 22, 2021, 4.8 million Ontarians have downloaded their enhanced vaccine certificate, and one million people are using the Verify Ontario app.
- On [July 16, 2021](#), the province [moved into Step Three](#) of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#). Face coverings in indoor public settings and physical distancing requirements remain in place throughout Step Three.
- Under the [2021 Budget](#), Ontario is investing an additional \$1.8 billion in the hospital sector in 2021-2022, bringing the total additional investment in hospitals since the start of the pandemic to over \$5.1 billion. This includes creating more than 3,100 additional hospital beds to increase capacity and reduce occupancy pressures caused by COVID-19.

Additional Resources

- [Enhanced COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate with QR Code and Verify Ontario App Available for Download Starting October 15](#)
- [Using your Enhanced Vaccine Certificate: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Ontario Cautiously Lifting Capacity Limits in Select Settings](#)
- [Ontario Cautiously Easing Capacity Limits in Select Settings Where Proof of Vaccination is Required](#)
- [Ontario to Require Proof of Vaccination in Select Settings](#)
- [Ontario Makes COVID-19 Vaccination Policies Mandatory for High-Risk Settings](#)
- For public inquiries, please contact the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY for people who are deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired: 1-866-797-0007).
- For resources in multiple languages to help local communication efforts in responding to COVID-19, visit Ontario's [COVID-19 communication resources webpage](#).
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.

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