

Local businesses excited to finally reopen under Stage One

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It was the first step back to normalcy as local restaurants and businesses deemed non-essential reopened their doors for in-person customers once again.

Last Friday (June 11) the province made the move into the first stage of its three stage Road Map to Recovery, and local businesses say it's a relief.

‘There was great relief with the shopkeepers that they were able to open again,’ said BIA chair Ed Crewson. ‘Businesses on Main Street are looking forward to being open, staying open, and having a good summer.’

‘It's a very positive step for downtown,’ he added.

Shannon's Tap and Grill, located on Main Street in Shelburne, is one of the local restaurants that has operated with take-out orders during the closure of indoor dining. Owner, Shannon Chahal, said her team immediately began preparing to reopen following the announcement of stage one, a process they've become accustomed to.

When the restaurant's small patio opened at noon on Friday, Chahal said they were already fully booked with reservations for the entire weekend, and a waitlist.

‘The energy between the team as well as the customers was something that we haven't seen in a really long time,’ said Chahal. ‘The excitement and the adrenaline kept the team going all day.’

Cobwebs and Caviar, a self-proclaimed ‘multi-personality shop’ which sells gifts, fabrics, and clothes has been deemed a non-essential business throughout the pandemic. AJ Grace-Cavey, owner of Cobwebs and Caviar recalled having to cancel six major events as well as bus tours due to the shutdowns ‘all of which had to be refunded.’

‘It was a pretty big hit,’ said Grace-Cavey.

Under the Stage One restrictions as a non-essential business, the shop was able to open with 15 per cent capacity and Grace-Cavey said they saw a steady flow of customers.

‘It was delightful. People were grateful, and just happy to browse and check things out,’ said Grace-Cavey. ‘The thing about fabric is that people want to touch it, they want to see it, and it's not a fun thing to buy online so people kept saying ‘we're so glad you're open.’’

While some local businesses have been able to open under limitations, others are still having to continue with adapted business models as they await their official reopening.

Local gym Towne Fitness, with the move to Stage One on June 11, was able to begin holding outdoor fitness classes for the second time. Despite fitness classes being a big part of the local gym, these classes have typically been held indoors.

‘The majority of our classes have always been indoors and we've had a pretty steady, loyal following with our members,’ said Hannah Sine, owner and personal trainer. ‘When we were not allowed to do the classes indoors we knew we needed to look for where we could hold them and how we could run them.’

Towne Fitness classes include Total Body Boot Camp; Outside the Box, a boxing based workout; Yoga via Zoom; and new classes Fundamental Fitness, and Drills and Thrills.

With the numerous shutdowns and restrictions the gym has faced, Sine said their overall membership has seen a 50 percent decline, which they're confident they can rebuild.

Speaking to being able to hold outdoor classes, Sine said, "It was exciting for us. I think it was more exciting for our members because they've really given us a lot of support, so they're the one that were most excited about reopening. Just being able to support them as much as we can through COVID makes us happy."

Towne Fitness will not be able to open the equipment side of the gym until at least July 25.

Stage Two of the Road Map to Reopening will tentatively begin on July 2.