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Ontario government unveils new reopening plan

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Out with the old, and in with the new.

The Ontario government announced last Thursday (May 20) the details of a new three-step plan, dubbed the Roadmap to Reopen, which will gradually reopen the province based on vaccination rates.

?The speed at which we get through this reopening will come down to one thing, how quickly we get people vaccinated,? said Premier Doug Ford, during a press conference at Queen's Park.

?The daily vaccination rate is the single biggest factor in our fight against COVID right now, it's how we start to look forward to a great summer.?

While restrictions under the new plan are expected to gradually easy through June, July, and August, the government reopened outdoor recreational amenities over the long weekend.

Outdoor recreational amenities including golf courses, tennis courts, skateboarding parks, and sports fields were allowed to open with restrictions as of May 22. Outdoor gathering limits were expanded to allow the amenities to be used by up to five people not in the same household. No outdoor sports or recreational classes were permitted.

The Town of Orangeville issued a news release following the announcement confirming that outdoor facilities would be ready to reopen, but added that some ball fields and soccer fields may be posted as undergoing maintenance and the Kin Family Park tennis net would be installed next week.

The Town of Shelburne also noted the reopening of outdoor amenities in Mayor Wade Mill's COVID-19 update.

Despite the new changes to some outdoor recreation the current stay-at-home order will remain in effect until June 2. The government said they expect step one of the three-step plan to begin the week of June 14 and will confirm closer to that date.

?Over the coming weeks our government will continue to work with businesses and sector partners to ensure a clear understanding of when and how they could begin to safely reopen,? said Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliott.

Elliott said step one of the roadmap will have a focus of resuming outdoor activities with smaller crowds, permitting retail with restrictions including outdoor gathers of up to 10 people, outdoor dining up to four people per table, and 15 per cent capacity for non-essential retail. Weddings, funerals, religious services, rites and ceremonies will have a maximum of 10 people indoors and outdoors permitted with capacity limited, but this does not apply to receptions.

Step one will begin after 60 per cent of Ontario adults have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Elliott said on May 20 that Ontario had reached 58 per cent.

Step Two of the new reopening plan will see expansion on outdoor activities, and the resuming of outdoor sports and leagues. Outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people, indoor gatherings up to five people and non-essential retail at 25 per cent capacity will be allowed. Public libraries and personal care service will also open with capacity limits and face coverings.

Weddings, funerals, religious services, rites and ceremonies will be permitted to have 15 per cent capacity indoors and outdoors permitted with capacity limited.

To enter Step Two, 70 per cent of adult will need to have one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 20 per cent of adults vaccinated with their second doses.

The final step in the reopening plan will begin when 70 to 80 per cent of adults in Ontario have received one dose of a vaccine and 25 per cent have received both doses.

Step Three of the plan will permit indoor services with larger numbers of people with restrictions in place including gyms, cinemas, performing arts facilities, indoor dining, casinos and museums.

Weddings, funerals, religious services, rites and ceremonies will be permitted to have larger indoor services and outdoor services with capacity limited.

The province will remain in each step of the reopening plan for at least 21 days to evaluate any impacts on the relaxed restrictions.