

Province and Town loosen restrictions on capacity limits as Ontario outlines new reopen plan

By Rob Paul

The Province of Ontario announced that as of October 25, capacity limits are being lifted in the vast majority of settings where proof of vaccination is required, such as restaurants, bars, gyms, and indoor meeting and event spaces.

This comes in response to continued improvements to key indicators, including ongoing stability in the province's hospitals.

The Ontario Government will also allow other settings to lift capacity limits and physical distancing requirements if they choose to require proof of vaccination.

Among the settings this applies to are personal care services; indoor areas of museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens, and similar attractions; indoor areas of fairs, rural exhibitions, festivals; and open house events provided by real estate agencies.

Coinciding with the province loosening restrictions, the Town of Caledon has also increased capacity limits in recreation centres, including the fitness centres at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness in Bolton and the Southfields Community Centre.

Patrons are reminded, however, that they must still book recreation activities in advance and provide proof of vaccination along with a piece of government-issued identification. Visitors must also continue to complete the online screening questionnaire on the Town's website prior to entry.

In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Ontario government also released "A Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term." The plan outlines the Province's gradual approach to lifting remaining public health and workplace safety measures by March 2022.

"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 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.

"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."

Following the plan, by November 15, 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.

If by January 17 there is not concerning evidence in public health and healthcare following the winter holiday and students returning to the classroom, the Province intends to begin gradually lifting capacity limits in settings where proof of vaccination is not required.

The proof of vaccination requirement may also begin to be gradually lifted at that time, and it intended to be lifted by February 7 in high-risk settings.

The final step of the gradual reopen is set for March 28 when the province intends to lift remaining public health and workplace safety measures, including wearing face coverings in indoor public settings.

Recommendations may be released for specific settings, if appropriate.

As Ontario moves towards reopening, Peel has seen a decrease in cases with 277 this week to bring its total to 117,921. The Region also saw one more death to bring its total to 1,022.

Caledon also saw a drop off in new cases this week with 10 to bring the Town total to 4,900 and there were no new deaths as the total stayed at 22.

Vaccination coverage in Peel is continuing to increase with 2,499,236 total doses administered and 16,516 in the last seven-day cycle (October 18 to 24). There are now 1,313,061 individuals with at least one dose, 1,180,156 individuals fully vaccinated, and 6,019 individuals who have received a third dose.

Of all residents in Peel, 72.8 per cent are fully vaccinated and 77.1 per cent have at least one dose. With children under the age of 12 not yet eligible for the vaccine, the coverage takes a significant leap when looking at the eligible population.

Of eligible residents, 88.5 per cent of adults (18+) have one dose and 83.8 per cent of adults are fully vaccinated while 88.3 per cent of those 12 and older have one dose and 83.4 per cent are fully vaccinated.

To book a vaccine in the Region of Peel, visit www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment.

To download or print a copy of your proof of vaccination, visit covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-booking-support#proof-of-vaccination.

To learn more about the official QR code system Ontario has implemented and to access yours, visit covid-19.ontario.ca/get-proof.