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Provincial Reopening Plans - Information for Restaurants, Cafés and Other Food Service Establishments

May 5, 2020

As the management of the COVID-19 situation in Canada gradually shifts from crisis management to economic recovery, many provinces have released detailed plans for easing lockdown restrictions and reopening their economies. While the plans vary in some respects, they all take a cautious, phased approach to loosening restrictions, especially with respect to allowing dine-in services at restaurants. Below is a breakdown of each province's and territory's plan to reopen dine-in services at restaurants, cafés and other food service establishments.

While we anticipate that further guidance regarding risk mitigation practices will be released by the provinces, these will likely include some or all of the following:

- Maximum capacity restrictions (50% of the maximum seating capacity, excluding bars and common areas has been indicated by many provinces);
- Social distancing of at least two (2) metres between tables/groups of customers;
- No buffets, salad bars or customer access fountain drinks;
- The use of barriers and floor markings to control traffic flow;
- No gathering of patrons at the entrance or cashier locations;
- Minimal contact between staff and customers;
- Increased workplace sanitation measures in both staff and customer areas;
- Minimizing the number of staff present at any time and possibly having dedicated shift teams;
- Use of personal protective equipment for staff as mandated or advisable;
- Arranging deliveries or other tasks to minimize contact with staff and customers.

In short, restaurant owners will need to ensure that they fully understand the applicable rules and best practices, so they can develop an operating plan prior to reopening. It is likely that the failure to comply with the applicable rules could result in fines or closures, as well as possible liability to staff and customers.

In addition to ensuring compliance with applicable rules and best practices, it will be important for restaurants to be seen doing what they can to mitigate risk to create confidence in staff that it is safe to return to work and in customers that it is safe to again enjoy the dine-in experience.

Alberta

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Alberta announced a three-staged relaunch, with specific requirements that need to be met before moving to the next stage. The first stage, which may be implemented as early as May 15, will allow cafés and restaurants with no bar service to reopen for public seating at 50% capacity, which likely refers to 50% of the maximum seating capacity of the restaurant or café, excluding bar seating. The implementation date of each stage depends on health measures being achieved to the satisfaction of the provincial government on the advice of the chief medical officer of health. The final stage, stage three, will fully reopen all businesses and services, with some limited restrictions still in place. The timing of stage three will be determined based on the success of stages one and two.

[For more information on Alberta's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Alberta's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

British Columbia

Premier John Horgan has announced that plans for reopening the province will be announced during the week of May 3, 2020. This plan will adopt a "phased-in approach." No specifics on reopening food service establishments has been released.

[For more information on how British Columbia's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Manitoba

Restaurants in Manitoba will be able to reopen patio and walk-up service on May 4, 2020, during the first phase of the province's reopening plan. Restaurants may be able to reopen indoor spaces at 50% capacity of "normal business levels" no earlier than June 1, 2020, during the second phase of the province's reopening plan. During this second phase, restaurants must still abide by physical distancing rules requiring two meters of distance between patrons. After the second phase, additional phases will be considered and may be implemented on a three-to-four-week basis.

[For more information on Manitoba's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Manitoba's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

New Brunswick

On April 24, 2020, New Brunswick implemented the first phase of the province's four-phase reopening plan.

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The second phase, which could begin two to four weeks after the curve flattens, would see restaurants reopen with strict controls in place at first, which will likely include reduced capacity for dine-in services. No specific dates have yet been released with respect to this phase or the other phases.

[For more information on New Brunswick's reopening framework, please click here.](#)

[For more information on New Brunswick's response to COVID-19, including the province's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

Newfoundland and Labrador

The province has announced the "COVID-19 Alert Level System," which has five alert levels that will gradually loosen lockdown measures at each level. No dates for implementation of the system have been released. Restaurants (excluding buffets, bars and lounges) will be allowed to reopen with reduced occupancy when the province is at alert level three. Bars and lounges will be permitted to reopen at reduced occupancy when the province is at alert level two. The province is currently at alert level five. Alert level four will relax some public health measures, but it will take at least 28 days to determine whether it is safe to move to alert level three.

[For more information on Newfoundland and Labrador's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Newfoundland and Labrador's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Nova Scotia

On May 1, 2020, Nova Scotia eased some of its public health measures implemented in response to COVID-19, including reopening provincial and municipal parks, garden centers and golf driving ranges. Social distancing directives, which require people to keep two metres apart and not gather in groups of more than five, remain in place. No plan has yet been released with respect to the reopening of restaurants and other food service establishments.

[For more information on Nova Scotia's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Ontario

Ontario released a three-phase framework for reopening businesses and services, and progress is based on certain criteria being met in the preceding stage. On May 4, 2020, certain seasonal businesses, such as

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lawn care and landscaping businesses, and some essential construction projects, will be permitted to begin operations. No specifics have been released as to when restaurants and food service establishments will be allowed to reopen. The Ontario Government has, however, released new safety guidelines for different sectors, including for the restaurant and food service sector, which will ensure employers have the safety guidelines they need to protect workers, customers and the general public from COVID-19 as the province prepares for the gradual reopening of the economy.

[For more information on Ontario's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For Ontario's new safety guidelines for the restaurant and food service sector, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Ontario's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island released a four-phase plan to reopen the province. Phase three, which is tentatively scheduled to be implemented on June 12, 2020, will allow indoor dining at food premises with the following restrictions: (i) no recreational spaces open (for example, pool tables and dance floors), (ii) no buffet style serving, (iii) no sharing of utensils, and (iv) only members of the same household can dine together. There is no date yet for when the fourth and final phase, which will further ease lockdown restrictions, will be implemented.

[For more information on Prince Edward Island's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Prince Edward Island's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Quebec

Quebec's current plan to reopen businesses does not include restaurants and other food service establishments. Businesses in the retail store sector, not including shopping malls, construction sector and manufacturing sector will all be allowed to reopen, with certain restrictions, in May. Premier Legault announced that restaurants and some other businesses will remain closed for the time being. More businesses will be added during subsequent phases, which are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

[For more information on Quebec's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Quebec's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

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Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan released a five-phase plan to reopen businesses and services across the province. Phase three will allow for the reopening of restaurants and food service establishments, excluding buffets, at 50% capacity of each establishment's regular capacity. Phase three's implementation date is yet to be released, but it is to be sometime after the implementation of phase two, which will be on May 19, 2020.

[For more information on Saskatchewan's reopening plan, please click here.](#)

[For more information on Saskatchewan's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories has not released a plan to lift its lockdown restrictions.

[For more information on the Northwest Territories' response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Nunavut

Nunavut has not released a plan to lift its lockdown restrictions.

[For more information on Nunavut response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

Yukon

Yukon has not released a plan to lift its lockdown restrictions.

[For more information on Yukon's response to COVID-19, please click here.](#)

The author of this article gratefully acknowledges the contributions of articling student Reza Sarsangi.

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