

Ontario re-opening for business: A gradual approach

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With Victoria Day a little more than a week away and people experiencing a growing urge to return to pre-COVID-19 routines, many governments, including the Ontario government, have announced plans to relax emergency measures that have been designed to control the spread of the nasty corona-19 virus.

The gradual re-opening of Ontario's economy began on May 1, with the government announcing that a small group of business would be allowed to re-open under strict public health measures and workplace guidelines.

This small group of businesses included garden centres and nurseries with curbside pick-up and delivery only, lawn care and landscaping service businesses, self-serve car washes, and auto dealerships, by appointment only.

As well, golf courses and marinas would be allowed to prepare for the upcoming golf and boating seasons. However, they still cannot be open to the public.

Certain essential construction projects were also allowed to re-open, including projects related to among other things, municipal projects, shipping and logistics, and site preparation, excavation, and servicing for institutional, commercial, industrial and residential development.

The announcement for the re-opening of certain businesses was accompanied by the announcement that the government, in partnership with Ontario's health and safety associations, had developed more than 60 guidelines in response to COVID19 and that these guidelines, which are sector-specific, would help businesses prepare to reopen safely. To re-open businesses must follow the guidelines.

This initial announcement was quickly followed up on 6 May 2020 with a further relaxation of the Ontario government's emergency measures.

As early as Friday, 8 May 2020, garden centres and nurseries will be allowed to open for in-store payment and purchases, provided they operate under the same guidelines as grocery stores and pharmacies.

Hardware stores and safety supply stores will be permitted to open for in-store payment and purchases beginning Saturday, 9 May 2020

On Monday, 11 May 2020, retail stores with a street entrance will be allowed to offer curbside pick-up and delivery. These stores will be required to adhere to the Ministry of Health's Guidance Document for Essential Workplaces and occupational health and safety requirements.

Also, the list of construction projects has been expanded to permit below-grade multi-unit residential construction to begin and to permit existing above-grade projects to continue.

The above measures are all in accordance with Ontario's gradual re-opening plan, entitled "[A Framework for Reopening our Province](#)", which was released by the Ontario government on 27 April 2020. Under this plan, Ontario expects to re-open for business under a three stage process which will first allow a small select group of workplaces to re-open, to be followed by the gradual re-opening of more business, and finally the re-opening of all workplaces.

Similarly, there will be a gradual easing on the restrictions related to social gatherings and the use of public spaces.

At each stage of the gradual re-opening process, businesses will be expected to comply with the applicable [guidelines](#) and to re-open responsibly.

As well, the government will be closely monitoring each stage, and it is expected that there will be two-to-four weeks between the launch of each stage.

Based on this time frame, and provided that there are no setbacks, Ontario should be back in full business by the end of June.

In the meantime, we strongly encourage you to review the government's framework for re-opening and to locate and examine the applicable guidelines that apply to your respective business.

If you require any assistance, the lawyers at Gardiner Roberts LLP will be pleased to help you.

(This blog is provided for educational purposes only, and does not necessarily reflect the views of Gardiner Roberts LLP).

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