



Peter Selander, long-time owner of MNI Bicycle Livery, has been keeping people's bikes in tip-top shape for years, and he took advantage of some nice weather recently to perform some maintenance at his Deep River shop. On Monday, Premier Doug Ford outlined how the province will move forward slowly until all businesses are back open to the public.

Photo: Vance Gutzman

Province outlines "framework" to reopen

The provincial government says it will only begin taking steps to lift Ontario's emergency measures and reopen the province's businesses and public spaces once it sees a "consistent" drop in new COVID-19 cases for two to four weeks.

On Monday, the government released its "framework" for reopening the province.

Details were provided by Premier Doug Ford, Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance, Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

"Our top priority remains protecting the health and safety of the people of Ontario and supporting our front-line heroes as we do everything in our power to contain and defeat this deadly virus," said Premier Ford.

"At the same time, we are preparing for the responsible restart of our economy.

"This next phase of our response to COVID-19 is designed to help us map out what needs to be done, and when, to get us back on the road to recovery."

Ford said the government is planning a three-stage approach to reopening the economy to ensure there are appropriate measures in place so workplaces can open safely.

Public health officials will carefully monitor each stage for two to four weeks, as they assess the evolution of the COVID-19 outbreak to determine if it is necessary to change course to maintain public health.

Stage 1 would include opening select workplaces that can "immediately modify operations" to meet public

health guidance, as well as opening some outdoor spaces like parks and allowing for a greater number of individuals to attend some events.

Stage 2 would see the opening of more workplaces, based on risk assessments, which may include some service industries and additional office and retail workplaces, along with larger public gatherings and opening more outdoor spaces.

Finally, Stage 3 would see the opening of all workplaces and further relaxing of restrictions on public gatherings.

"Throughout each stage, continued protections for vulnerable populations must be in place, along with the continued practice of physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene, and significant mitigation plans to limit health risks," the province said.

TURNING THE CORNER

"Recent public health indicators show us that we're beginning to turn a corner in the COVID-19 outbreak, while economic data, feedback from businesses and insights from our communities are outlining how we need to plan for economic recovery," said Minister Phillips.

"Turning on an economy after an unprecedented shutdown is not as simple as flipping a switch.

"We need to plan this out carefully to ensure we do not spark a sudden outbreak, undo the progress we have made and put the safety of the public at risk."

The chief medical officer of health and health experts will provide advice to the government about easing pub-

lic health measures using a range of criteria, including:

- A consistent two-to-four week decrease in the number of new daily COVID-19 cases;
- Sufficient acute and critical care capacity, including access to ventilators and ongoing availability of personal protective equipment;
- Approximately 90 per cent of new COVID-19 contacts are being reached by local public health officials within one day, with guidance and direction to contain community spread; and
- Ongoing testing of suspected COVID-19 cases, especially of vulnerable populations, to detect new outbreaks quickly.

"It is because of the collective efforts of all Ontarians to stay at home and stop the spread of COVID-19 that we are able to consider plans to move into the next phase of our battle against this virus," said Minister Elliott.

"The chief medical officer of health has outlined some criteria he will use to advise government on when we may begin to slowly and safely ease public health measures and restart our economy.

"To be able to do so, we need everyone to continue their extraordinary efforts so that we can meet these thresholds and begin to move forward."

While supporting the government's "cautious approach," Opposition NDP leader Andrea Horwath said successfully re-opening the province's economy will take action, "not just words and passive monitoring."

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