



What's New in HR Law

Ontario Moving to Next Phase of Reopening on February 17

February 15, 2022

Bottom Line

The Ontario Government announced on February 14, 2022, that it will ease public health measures sooner than previously announced, due to continued improvements in key public health and health system indicators. The next phase of Ontario's reopening plan will come into effect on February 17, 2022 at 12:01 a.m.

Background Facts

On January 31, 2022, the Government of Ontario released its plan to follow a phased approach to lifting public health and workplace safety measures if health indicators continued to improve. For a more detailed discussion of the January 31, 2022 announcement, please refer to our previous update: <https://filion.on.ca/insights/ontario-easing-public-health-restrictions-the-path-forward/>.

In a subsequent announcement on February 14, 2022, the Ontario Government stated that certain public health measure will be eased effective February 17, 2022 – four days sooner than previously anticipated.

Public Health Measures Eased Effective February 17, 2022

Effective February 17, 2022 at 12:01 a.m., the Ontario Government will ease certain public health measures, including:

- Increasing social gathering limits to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors.
- Increasing organized public event limits to 50 people indoors, with no limit outdoors.
- Removing capacity limits in the following indoor public settings where proof of vaccination is required, including but not limited to:
 - Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments without dance facilities;
 - Non-spectator areas of sports and recreational fitness facilities, including gyms;
 - Cinemas;
 - Meeting and event spaces, including conference centres or convention centres;
 - Casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments; and
 - Indoor areas of settings that choose to opt-in to proof of vaccination requirements.
- Allowing 50 per cent of the usual seating capacity at sports arenas.
- Allowing 50 percent of the usual seating capacity for concert venues and theatres.
- Increasing indoor capacity limits to 25 per cent in the remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required, including nightclubs, restaurants where there is dancing, as well as bathhouses and sex clubs.
- Increasing capacity limits for indoor weddings, funerals or religious services, rites, or ceremonies to the number of people who can maintain two metres of physical distance. Capacity limits are removed if the location opts-in to use proof of vaccination or if the service, rite, or ceremony is occurring outdoors.

Capacity limits in other indoor public settings, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, retail and shopping malls, will be maintained at, or increased to, the number of people who can maintain two metres physical distance.

Additional Public Health Measures May Be Lifted on March 1, 2022

The Government of Ontario also indicated that it intends to take additional steps to ease public health measures effective March 1, 2022, if public health and health system indicators continue to improve. These potential future steps include:

- Lifting capacity limits in all remaining indoor public settings; and
- Lifting proof of vaccination requirements for all settings, although businesses and other settings may choose to continue to require proof of vaccination.

Masking requirements will remain in place at this time, with a specific timeline to lift this measure to be communicated at a later date.

Check the Box

As the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic improve, employers should remain mindful of the evolving public health measures and related impacts to their business. Employers should also ensure that any changes to their operations and policies are appropriately

implemented and communicated to affected stakeholders. An effective implementation and communication strategy may assist companies and organizations in smoothly navigating the “return to normal” as Ontario’s reopening plan progresses.

Need More Information?

For more information or assistance with workplace management issues amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, contact [Emily La Mantia](#) at 416.408.5511 or your regular lawyer at the firm.



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