

Alberta's safely staged COVID-19 relaunch

April 30, 2020

A phased relaunch will put Albertans' safety first as we gradually reopen closed businesses and services and get people back to work.

"I'm confident Albertans will approach relaunch with the same adaptability and resilience they have shown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We will move forward together with care and common sense, knowing tough times are still ahead. We will support and protect vulnerable Albertans and keep them safe as we build our province back up one stage at a time."

Jason Kenney, Premier

It is because Albertans have acted responsibly, respecting public health advice, that we have been able to limit the spread of COVID-19, keep localized outbreaks within the capacity of our health-care system, and now take the first incremental steps to reopen some businesses and services.

Early actions

The plan to move forward requires careful and ongoing monitoring and respecting all guidelines outlined by the chief medical officer of health:

- Alberta Health Services will resume some scheduled, non-urgent surgeries as soon as May 4.
- Dental and other health-care workers, such as physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, respiratory therapists, audiologists, social workers, occupational therapists, dieticians and more, will be allowed to resume services starting May 4, as long as they are following approved guidelines set by their professional colleges.

Recognizing the role that access to the outdoors and recreation in the outdoors plays to Albertans' sense of well-being, access to provincial parks and public lands will be re-opened using a phased approach, beginning with:

Related information

[COVID-19 info for Albertans](#)

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- Vehicle access to parking lots and staging areas in parks and on public lands opening May 1.
- Opening a number of boat launches in provincial parks on May 1 and working to have them all open by May 14. Check albertaparks.ca for the status of boat launches.
- Government is working hard to make campsites available as soon as possible, with the goal to have as many open as possible by June 1 so Albertans can enjoy our parks while adhering to current health orders. At this time, sites are open to Albertans only. Check albertaparks.ca for updates.
- Group and comfort camping will not be offered. Campground facility access restrictions to areas such as showers, picnic and cooking shelters will also be posted to albertaparks.ca.
- Alberta Parks' online [reservation system](http://albertaparks.ca) will be available May 14 to book site visits beginning June 1. Out-of-province bookings will not be processed.
- No washrooms or garbage pickup will be available within provincial parks at this time. These services will be available as soon as Alberta Environment and Parks brings staff back. These seasonal positions represent an important opportunity for Albertans to secure employment during challenging economic times.
- Fire bans in parks, protected areas and the Forest Protection Area remain in place.
- No off-highway vehicle restrictions are currently in place. Local restrictions may be required if the risk for [wildfires](http://albertaparks.ca) increases.
- Private and municipal campgrounds and parks can open with physical distancing restrictions, under their own local authority.
- Golf courses can open on May 4, with restrictions including keeping clubhouses and pro shops closed. On-site shops and restaurants can open in stage one, consistent with other businesses and retailers.

Requirements to move to next stage

Additional restrictions will be lifted in stages when safe.

Before we move to stage one, several safeguards will be put in place:

- Enhancing our nation-leading COVID-19 testing capacity at the highest level in Canada.
- Robust and comprehensive contact tracing, aided by technology, to quickly notify people who may have been exposed.
- Support for those who test positive for COVID-19, to enable isolation and effectively contain the spread.
- Stronger international border controls and airport screening, especially for international travellers.
- Rules and guidance for the use of masks in crowded spaces, especially on mass transit.
- Maintaining strong protections for the most vulnerable, including those in long-term care, continuing care and seniors lodges.

A rapid response plan is in place in the event of possible outbreaks of COVID-19. This includes outbreak protocols to quickly identify close contacts in order to stop spread, making testing widely available including testing those without symptoms in outbreak settings, and providing temporary housing for isolation and other necessary supports for anyone at risk.

Physical distancing requirements of two metres will remain in place through all stages of relaunch and hygiene practices will continue to be required of businesses and individuals, along with instructions for Albertans to stay home when exhibiting symptoms such as cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat.

“There are signs that our collective efforts of physical distancing, good hygiene practices, and staying home when advised are helping to slow the spread. However, we must guard against complacency and be patient to ensure the sacrifices we have already made to contain the virus are not wasted by carelessness as we gradually reopen businesses and services.”

Deena Hinshaw, chief medical officer of health

Further opening in stages

Progress to Stage 1 will occur once health measures are achieved to the satisfaction of the government based on the advice of the chief medical officer of health, as early as May 14.

Stage 1 highlights:

- With increased infection prevention and controls, to minimize the risk of increased transmission of infections, some businesses and facilities can start to gradually resume operations as early as May 14:
 - Retail businesses, such as clothing, furniture and bookstores. All vendors at farmers markets will also be able to operate.
 - Some personal services like hairstyling and barber shops.
 - Museums and art galleries.
 - More scheduled surgeries, dental procedures, physiotherapy, chiropractic, optometry and similar services.
 - Daycares and out-of-school care with limits on occupancy.

- Summer camps with limits on occupancy. This could include summer school.
- Cafés, restaurants (minors allowed in liquor licensed establishments) with no bar service to reopen for public seating at 50 per cent capacity.
- Some additional outdoor recreation.
- Post-secondary institutions will continue to deliver courses, however how programs are delivered – whether online, in-person, or a blend – will be dependent on what restrictions remain in place at each relaunch phase.
- The use of masks will be strongly recommended in certain specific crowded public spaces, like mass transit, that do not allow for physical distancing (two metres apart).

Still not permitted in stage 1:

- Gatherings of more than 15 people. (Gatherings of 15 people or fewer must follow personal distancing and other public health guidelines.)
- Arts and culture festivals, major sporting events, and concerts, all of which involve close physical contact.
- Movie theatres, theatres, pools, recreation centres, arenas, spas, gyms and nightclubs will remain closed.
- Visitors to patients at health-care facilities will continue to be limited.
- In-school classes for kindergarten to Grade 12 students.

Recommendations:

- Non-essential travel, especially travel outside the province, is not recommended.
- Remote working is advised where possible.

Stage 2 highlights:

- Timing of this stage will be determined by the success of Stage 1, considering the capacity of the health-care system and continued limiting and/or reduction of the rate of infections, hospitalization and ICU cases.
- Will allow additional businesses and services to reopen and resume operations with two metre physical distancing requirements and other public health guidelines in place. This includes:
 - Potential kindergarten to Grade 12 schools, with restrictions.
 - More scheduled surgeries, including backlog elimination.
 - Personal services, such as artificial tanning, esthetics, cosmetic skin and body treatments, manicures, pedicures, waxing, facial treatments, massage and reflexology.
 - Permitting of some larger gatherings (number of people to be determined as we learn more about the levels of risk for different activities) in some situations.
 - Movie theatres and theatres open with restrictions.

Visitors to patients at health-care facilities will continue to be limited.

Still not permitted in stage 2:

- Nightclubs, gyms, pools, recreation centres, and arenas will remain closed.

- Arts and culture festivals, concerts, attendance at major sporting events and other mass gatherings will continue to not be permitted.

Recommendations:

- Non-essential travel is not recommended.

Stage 3 highlights:

Timing of this stage is to be determined based on the success of stages 1 and 2 and will involve:

- Fully reopening all businesses and services, with some limited restrictions still in place.
- Permitting larger gatherings (number of people to be determined).
- Permitting arts and culture festivals, concerts and major sporting events with some restrictions.
- Permitting nightclubs, gyms, pools, recreation centres and arenas to reopen with restrictions.
- Resuming industry conferences with restrictions.
- No restrictions on non-essential travel.

Quick facts

- Relaunch stages will also include an evaluation and monitoring period to determine if restrictions should be adjusted up or down. Triggers that will inform decisions on the lessening or tightening of restrictions include hospitalizations and intensive care unit (ICU) occupancy.
- Confirmed cases and rates of new infections will be monitored on an ongoing basis to inform proactive responses in localized areas of the province.
- Decisions will be applied at both provincial and local levels, where necessary. While restrictions are gradually eased across the province, an outbreak may mean that they need to be strengthened temporarily in a local area.
- Faith-based organizations are an essential part of the lives of Albertans. They continue to be able to practice, subject to public health direction, including mass gatherings and physical distancing. Government is working with faith-based organizations to learn from past outbreaks and provide guidance related to specific practices including singing and other traditions to ensure safety while supporting social connection.