

COVID- 19 Lockdown Extension

The Ontario government has announced a second extension of the province's current COVID-19 lockdown to June 2.

The latest state of emergency and stay-at-home order began on April 8 for a minimum of four weeks and was later extended to six weeks, based on data from health officials that showed a rise in COVID-19 cases, as well as hospital and ICU capacity.

Premier Doug Ford made the announcement to extend the deadline once more on May 13, citing "new, more contagious variants" as a primary reason not to ease measures just yet.

Today, the province reported 2,759 new cases of COVID-19 and 31 new deaths. Hospitalizations in the province due to COVID-19 are currently sitting at 1,632, and 715 of those individuals are in ICU.

"While we are seeing positive trends as a result of the public health measures put in place, we cannot afford to let up yet," Ford said. "We must stay vigilant to ensure our ICU numbers stay down and our hospital capacity is protected."

On May 12, the Ontario Medical Association said its doctors support the province extending the lockdown but added that some outdoor recreational activities should open in the meantime to help improve Ontarians' mental and physical health during this time.

Ford did not announce the easing of any outdoor restrictions.

Rather, he said, "by June 2, so long as we stay the course, we will be able to reopen outdoor recreation and by then we will provide more details on our plan to carefully and safely begin to reopen the province in the days and weeks to follow."

Ford noted that while his goal is "to have the most normal July and August possible, obviously that won't mean large sporting events or concerts."

For a reopening to begin to take place on June 2, Health Minister Christine Elliott said the province would have to see improvements in a number of areas, including lower case numbers, less hospitalizations, and less people in ICU. She noted that the province is "well on track," however, to reach its goal of vaccinating 65 percent of Ontarians over the age of 18 by the end of May.

With regards to schools reopening, Ford cited a lack of consensus among stakeholders, including doctors and teachers' unions, as a reason why a decision has not yet been made on the matter.

"For the time being, we will need to continue with virtual learning," Ford said. He noted that vaccinations among educators will continue and as of May 31, children between the ages of 12 and 17, and any family members who have not yet been vaccinated, will be able to schedule their appointments for the Pfizer vaccine.

Source: <https://www.hamiltonnews.com/news-story/10393213-ontario-s-covid-19-lockdown-extended-to-june-2-ford-announces/?fbclid=IwAR2IbqVO4CVzgkACea0btn9jT1F4CxF2xr5G7GVrHLH7IBiFtHvBf5epQBc>