



Ontario Government Announces Further Easing of COVID-19 Restrictions

February 16, 2022

As detailed in our earlier [Focus Alert](#), on January 31, 2022, the government of Ontario began the gradual resumption of its reopening plans following the imposition of more stringent public health and workplace safety requirements in response to the highly transmissible Omicron variant. With the peak of the Omicron variant now seemingly behind us, the government of Ontario recently announced its intention to cautiously move to the next phase of reopening a few days earlier than initially anticipated.

What does this mean in terms of public health and workplace safety restrictions?

As of 12:01 a.m. on February 17, 2022, [O. Reg. 75/22](#), amending [O. Reg. 364/20](#) (Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step) will come into force. Pursuant to the amended regulation, Ontario will further ease public health and workplace safety measures, including but not limited to:

- Removing capacity limits in the following indoor public settings where proof of vaccination is required, including, for example:
 - Restaurants, bars and other food and 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
- Allowing 50% of the usual seating capacity at sports arenas, concert venues and theatres,
- Increasing indoor capacity limits to 25% 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 (2) metres of physical distance from others, though capacity limits are removed altogether if the location opts-in to the use of proof of vaccination or if the service, rite or ceremony is taking place outdoors,
- Increasing capacity limits for personal care services to the number of people who can maintain two (2) metres of physical distance from others, though capacity limits are removed altogether if the business opts-in to the use of proof of vaccination, and
- Maintaining or increasing capacity limits in other indoor public settings, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, retail and shopping malls, to the number of people who can maintain two (2) metres of physical distance from others.



It is also important to note the following additional changes to the current rules and restrictions:

- Social gathering limits are increased to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors, and
- Capacity limits for organized public event limits are increased to 50 people indoors, with no limit outdoors.

What comes next?

If public health and health care system indicators continue to improve, Ontario is expected to see a further easing of COVID-19 restrictions on March 1, 2022. Specifically, at that time, it is anticipated that capacity limits will be lifted in all remaining indoor public settings, as will proof of vaccination requirements for all settings. That being said, businesses and organizations will be permitted to continue to require proof of vaccination where appropriate. Masking requirements will also remain in place for the foreseeable future.

In Our View

The continued easing of COVID-19 restrictions – and even sooner than previously expected – is viewed as a positive development for many employers and employees who are eager for a return to some form of normalcy in the coming months. We will continue to monitor and report on any further developments in that regard.

For more information on your rights and obligations as an employer dealing with COVID-19 and related issues, please contact [Jennifer Birrell](#) at 613-940-2740.