BC Enters Step 2 of the BC Restart Plan

June 24, 2021

BC entered the second step of its Restart Plan on June 15, 2021, as more than 75% of adults in the province received their first vaccine dose, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths have been declining.

All capacity limits and guidelines listed in Step 1 remain in place unless otherwise noted. In Step 2, masks and social distancing continue to be mandatory indoors, and if anyone feels sick, they must stay home and get tested. The expected length of Step 2 is approximately two weeks (the length of one incubation period), which allows the province to monitor pandemic trends.

Gradual loosening of restrictions

The lifted restrictions that came into effect in Step 2 are as follows:

Organized Gatherings

- The limit for indoor-seated organized gatherings has been increased to 50 people; in addition, a COVID-19 Safety Plan must be in place (this applies to movie theatres and live theatres).
- The limit on outdoor-seated organized gatherings has been increased to 50 people; in addition, a COVID-19 Safety Plan must be in place.
- Indoor faith gatherings may now count up to 50 people or, if the space has a larger capacity, 10% of the total capacity (ex. if capacity is normally 1,000 people, 100 people may attend the indoor faith gathering in Step 2).
- Consultation with the sector will begin for the next steps on indoor and outdoor organized gatherings.

Businesses

- Liquor services may stay open until midnight.
- Banquet halls may reopen but with limited capacity (up to 50 people are allowed, considering that a COVID-19 safety plan must be in place).
- Safety Plans sector consultations will take place regarding the next steps on easing restrictions.

- Movie theatres and live theatres are reopening (up to 50 people considering a COVID-19 safety plan must be in place).
- Indoor sports (games and practices for all ages, no spectators) and HIIT programs (at a reduced capacity) may reopen with COVID-19 safety plans.
- Outdoor sports may now have spectators.

Offices and Workplaces

- Offices and workplaces can continue to return to work.
- Small, in-person meetings are now permitted.
- Employers must continue to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan and daily health check in place.

Other

- BC Transit and BC Ferries service are now allowed to increase service.
- Intra-provincial travel restrictions have now been lifted. However, inter-provincial travel continues to be discouraged.

Government initiatives

Additionally, some government initiatives are presently in place to support employers and employees who have been affected by the pandemic.

Skilled Trades Workers Certification System

- The province will launch a new certification system to provide better work opportunities for trade workers since the pandemic has impacted many people in the workforce.
- Premier John Horgan stated, “this is a made-in-B.C. solution to ensure confidence that a highly-skilled workforce is behind our recovery while providing good, family-supporting jobs that tradespeople can count on. By working together, we’re ensuring B.C. comes out of the pandemic stronger, with a recovery that reaches people across the province.”

Small and Medium Sized Business Recovery Grant

- This recovery grant aims to help small and medium-sized businesses that the pandemic has impacted. As of now, the province has provided $290 million to this program and is planning to add even more. The program runs until July 2, 2021.

Looking forward – next steps in the BC Restart Plan

Public Health and WorkSafeBC are working together to move away from COVID-19 safety plans and instead create new guidance regarding general communicable diseases safety plans. Guidance to revise safety plans are expected to be available on the WorkSafeBC's website at some point before July 1, 2021. Businesses should adapt their safety plans to reflect this updated guidance as soon as it is available.

The earliest start date for Step 3 is July 1, 2021. In order to move to the next step, 70% of people over 18 must be vaccinated with their first dose (a threshold that has already been met), and COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths should become lower. The earliest start date for Step 4 is September 7, 2021.

Special thanks to BLG Student Maryama Elmi for her contribution.

By

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