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Ontario to take a regional approach with Stage-2 of reopening the economy

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By Nate Smelle

On Monday, June 8 the Government of Ontario announced that it was moving forward with a regional approach to Stage-2 of reopening the province. Indicating that they had made the decision in consultation with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. David Williams and local health officials, the government acknowledged that it would be ?easing restrictions in communities where it is safe to do so, based on trends of key public health indicators such as lower rates of transmission, increased capacity in hospitals, and progress made in testing.?As of 12:01 a.m. on Friday, June 12, the province is increasing the limit on social gatherings from five to 10 people province-wide, regardless of whether a region has moved to Stage-2. All places of worship throughout Ontario will also be permitted to open starting Friday, as long as physical distancing measures remain in place and attendance is limited to no more than 30 per cent of the building's capacity.?We are able to make this announcement today because of the extraordinary effort of our frontline workers and every other person in the province who helped to stop the spread of this deadly virus,? said Premier Doug Ford. ?Entering Stage-2 means parts of the province will see more people back on the job and an opportunity to get back together with friends and family,? said Premier Doug Ford.?Although this is extremely encouraging, I urge everyone to exercise caution and continue to follow public health advice as we are not out of the woods yet.?Hastings Prince Edward Public Health is one of 24 regional public health units granted permission to enter Stage-2. Within these regions many businesses and services will be allowed to resume with proper health and safety measures in place. During Stage-2 outdoor dine-in services at restaurants, bars and other establishments, including patios, curbside, parking lots and adjacent properties will now be allowed to open. Some of the other businesses/services about to open in Hastings and Prince Edward counties include: select personal care services including tattoo parlours, barber shops, hair salons and beauty salons; shopping malls, including food services reopening for take-out and outdoor dining only; tour and guide services, such as bike and walking, bus and boat tours, as well as tasting and tours for wineries, breweries and distilleries; water recreational facilities such as outdoor splash pads and wading pools, and all swimming pools; beach access and additional camping at Ontario Parks; camping at private campgrounds; outdoor-only recreational facilities and training for outdoor team sports, with limits to enable physical distancing; drive-in and drive-through venues for theatres, concerts, animal attractions and cultural appreciation, such as art installations; film and television production activities, with limits to enable physical distancing; and weddings and funerals, with limits on social gatherings to 10 people.Recognizing that more people will be returning to work during Stage-2 the province acknowledged that it would soon be releasing new information regarding services such as child care, summer camps, post-secondary education pilots to help people graduate, training centres, and public transit.