

Saskatchewan plans to open golf courses, retail stores, hairdressers come May

The Canadian Press Stephanie Taylor

Dentist offices, hairdressers, golf courses and retail stores could be allowed to reopen starting in May under Saskatchewan's plan to re-fire parts of its economy during the COVID-19 crisis.

The five-phase plan presented Thursday includes timelines for when businesses and services shuttered to protect against the spread of the novel coronavirus might be allowed to open their doors.

Premier Scott Moe has said the number of COVID-19 cases will be monitored throughout each phase and the government will only move ahead if the infection rate stays low. In a televised speech Wednesday night, he said health officials are looking to increase testing and contact tracing.

So far, Saskatchewan has reported 326 cases of COVID-19 and four deaths.

Check below for the province's reopening plan

Some other provinces are thinking about reopening some parts of their economies as spread of the virus becomes manageable, but Saskatchewan says it's the first to release a detailed plan with dates and a timeline.

"Some may be concerned that this is far too soon, that reopening businesses in the coming weeks could increase the spread of COVID-19," Moe told a news conference.

"We have to find the middle ground that continues to keep our case numbers low and keep Saskatchewan people safe, while at the same time allowing for businesses to reopen and Saskatchewan people to get back to work."

Restrictions are to lift first for medical services such as dentists, optometrists and physical therapy on May 4. That also applies to fishing and boat launches.

Golf courses could be allowed to reopen on May 15, followed on May 19 by retail shops that sell clothing, flowers, books, sporting goods and toys.

The government says hairdressers, barbers, massage therapists, and acupuncturists could also begin seeing clients again on that day, but employees working directly with customers would have to wear masks.

The plan says businesses would be expected to maintain strict cleanliness standards as well as physical distancing. Operators would be asked to screen clients and wear masks and gloves if those measures were not possible.

Next, officials would consider lifting restrictions on indoor and outdoor recreational and entertainment facilities and bumping up the size of allowable gatherings to 30 people from the current 10.



Saqib Shahab, chief medical health officer, right, speaks while Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan, looks on at a COVID-19 news update at the Legislative Building in Regina on Wednesday March 18, 2020. Saskatchewan has released its five-phase plan to reopen the province. Michael Bell / THE CANADIAN PRESS

The final phase of the plan includes lifting restrictions on crowd sizes, visits to long-term care facilities and non-essential travel. Moe has already said those will stay put for some time.

The government's plan doesn't provide a timeline for when gyms might be allowed to operate or when daycare capacity might be increased.

Nor does it give a time frame for food services and restaurants to reopen, but when they do, they will be expected to operate at half their capacity.

Moe said he doesn't see an issue with provinces lifting restrictions at different times and would be speaking to premiers on their weekly call. He said he had already shared the reopening plan with the federal government and some of the provinces.

The premier also said he doesn't think it would be unexpected to see a small increase in cases. Saskatchewan's chief medical health officer said transmission of the coronavirus will continue.

Phase One

May 4: Dentists, optometrists, physical and occupational therapists, and chiropractors to be allowed to resume services.

May 4: Boat launches in provincial parks to reopen. Passengers in boats all have to be from the same household. Shoreline anglers to maintain two-metre physical distancing. Fishing off public docks to remain banned.

May 4: Online reservations for provincial parks to go ahead.

May 15: Golf courses to open. Driving ranges, practice putting areas and clubhouses to stay closed. Golf club rentals not allowed. Tee times at least 20 minutes apart. Only one person to be allowed in a golf cart at a time, unless golfers are from the same household. Carts to be fully sanitized between uses.

June 1: Parks and campgrounds to reopen if precautionary measures such as disinfecting common areas and physical distancing are practised.

Phase Two

May 19: Retail businesses such as clothing stores, flower shops, sporting-good stores, jewelry stores, pawn shops, travel agencies and toy stores to reopen. Stores to minimize customers touching merchandise, to prohibit trying on clothing and to limit the number of shoppers inside. Exchanges or returns not to be allowed.

May 19: Salons and barber shops to reopen. Massage therapists and acupuncturists to be allowed to practise again. Physical distancing expected and, when that's not possible, client screening, gloves and face masks required.

Phase Three

No date for implementation of this phase.

- Size of public and private gatherings to increase to 15 people from the current 10.
- Restaurants and coffee shops to reopen with a limit of 50 per cent capacity. Buffets not allowed.
- Bars to open at half capacity. Dance floors, VLTs or pool tables not allowed.
- Estheticians, tattoo studios, cosmetologists, piercers and tanning salons to reopen.
- Gyms and fitness facilities may resume but must follow strict cleaning protocols.
- Child-care facilities to open doors. Any located in long-term care homes to have a private entrance for children.

Phase Four

No date for implementation.

- Size of public and private gatherings to be increased to 30 people.
- Casinos, bingo halls, arenas, swimming pools, galleries, theatres, museums and curling rinks to reopen.
- Public to be allowed to use municipal parks and playgrounds.
- Seasonal programming, summer camps, and recreational and athletic activities to go ahead.

Phase Five

No date for implementation.

— The province to consider lifting restrictions on the size of public gatherings, non-essential travel and on visits to long-term care facilities and personal care homes.