

Doug Ford: Golf courses can begin preparations in Ontario - TSN.ca

Bob Weeks

Weeks explains what golf courses around the country can expect in the near future

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Ontario took a half step towards starting the golf season on Friday when Premier Doug Ford announced that golf courses could begin to prepare courses for opening.

The measure falls short of allowing golfers to tee it up, but clearly that's just around the corner.

Prior to the announcement, golf facilities were restricted to essential work that allowed them to preserve the value of the course. That meant minimal mowing of greens, tees, fairways and rough, along with a few other activities.

Under the new ruling, courses can now do things such as bunker preparation, garden maintenance, stump removal and bringing down the heights of cutting on rough and greens. It will also allow courses to hire more staff to complete the jobs.

While that's good news, it also means managing the strict safety regulations in place for the staff working on the facilities. With more workers that becomes more of a challenge.

Nova Scotia made a similar announcement in starting its golf season. Driving ranges may open immediately and, like Ontario, courses can begin preparations to open up.

In most of Canada golf courses are open or have scheduled dates to open. B.C., New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Alberta are up and running while Manitoba will open on Monday, Newfoundland and Labrador on May 11, and Saskatchewan on May 15.

There is no timeline yet for courses in Quebec.

All the course openings come with significant rules such as no bunker rakes, removal of pins or ball washers. No clubhouse entry or food service other than pickup is allowed, and tee times will be spread out with as long as 20 minutes between groups.

Ontario has roughly 800 golf courses, the most of any province. It's a significant part of the economy, contributing more than \$5 billion to the province's GDP.