



**CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS**
In business for your business.

June 1, 2021

Hon. Doug Ford, MPP
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Re: Let small businesses reopen now

Dear Premier:

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) is a non-partisan business association representing 95,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in all sectors across Canada. On behalf of over 38,000 members in Ontario, we urge you to immediately begin reopening the economy to save thousands of businesses from being forced to shutter their doors permanently.

Tomorrow is supposed to be the day that our retailers, our restaurant patios, our gyms and our hair salons finally reopen their doors after two long months of province-wide lockdown. Instead, Ontario's reopening plan has them remaining closed for at least another two weeks, and many for much longer. Meanwhile, COVID cases continue a strong downward trend, and estimates show vaccinations have already hit the first-dose threshold for Step 2.

Only 42 per cent of Ontario's small businesses are fully open and only 37 per cent are fully staffed. A mere 27 per cent are at normal revenue levels. All these indicators lag CFIB's national average and are among the worst in the country, ahead of only Nova Scotia.

The situation is dire, and the cost of not moving sooner will be immense.

Restaurants in Toronto have been closed to indoor dining for 367 days across the various provincial lockdowns, shutdowns, and emergency breaks. An entire year's worth of business has been lost and the industry is looking – at minimum – at another 67 days of being closed to indoor dining under the current plan. This news is particularly frustrating to Ontario restaurant owners when their counterparts in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and much of Quebec were allowed to reopen to indoor dining in the first steps of reopening plans, instead of the last.

Cumulative number of days small businesses have been closed, by sector and region

Sector	Spring Lockdown		Current Lockdown ¹		Total Days Closed	
	Toronto	Peel	Toronto	Peel	Toronto	Peel
Restaurants (indoor dining)	135	135	232 ²	191	367	326
Hair Salons/Barbers	92	92	191	191	283	283
Gyms (indoor fitness)	129	129	225 ³	218 ⁴	354	347
Events at full capacity ⁷					435 ⁷	435 ⁷
Big Box stores with grocery	0	0	0	0	0	0

Retail (in store)	56	56	105 ⁵	105 ⁵	215 (54) ⁶	215 (54) ⁶
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Event spaces, concert halls, wedding venues and conference centres haven't been at full capacity since the pandemic broke out over 400 days ago. Florists, caterers and décor businesses are telling us that the 2021 wedding season is already a lost cause.

If current trends continue, Alberta is expected to be fully open around the same time Ontario allows haircuts.

Yes, other provinces have used business lockdowns at various points during the pandemic. But no jurisdiction in North America – and very few in the world – have locked down businesses for the length of time businesses have been closed in Ontario. From decisions like closing ski hills and golf courses, to completely shutting down non-essential retailers and hair salons, the phrase “only in Ontario” has been far too common throughout the pandemic. In British Columbia, retailers were never closed to in-store customers.

We urge you to immediately reopen:

- All retailers at minimum 20% capacity.
- Restaurant patios and limited indoor service.
- Hair salons and barbers by appointment.
- Gyms and recreational activities by appointment.

We further urge you to go back to the drawing board on Ontario's reopening plan to:

- Announce significantly earlier reopening dates in line with other provinces.
- Provide a detailed timeline for the full economy to reopen, including events and entertainment.
- Allow regions with low case numbers and hospitalization rates to reopen much faster.
- Announce a 3rd round of Ontario Small Business Support Grant funding and expand coverage to all businesses that have been locked down or significantly affected by a shutdown or stay-at-home order.

Time is quickly running out for Ontario small business owners to keep their firms afloat. Many have exhausted their personal savings and as of July, will start losing access to federal funding programs while still being fully shut down by the province. Swift action must be taken now to begin reopening the provincial economy for the sake of saving small business.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dan Kelly
President and CEO

Original signed by

Ryan Mallough
Director of Provincial Affairs, Ontario

Original signed by

Julie Kwiecinski
Director of Provincial Affairs, Ontario

¹ November 23, 2020-June 1, 2021

² Never reopened after October 10 “modified stage 2” order

³ Closed October 10-November 14 as part of “modified stage 2” order

⁴ Closed October 10-November 7 as part of “modified stage 2” order

⁵ Reopened March 8, 2021

⁶ Closed April 8, 2021

⁷ Event spaces like wedding venues, conference centres and concert halls have never been allowed full capacity