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Ontario doubling limit on gatherings, more businesses to reopen in next stage of COVID-19 recovery plan

Ontarians will soon be allowed to gather in groups of up to 10 and many more businesses and services will be allowed to begin operating again as part of the next stage of the province's regional reopening, set to begin in some areas later this week.

While most regions in the province given green light to move into next stage on Friday, GTA will need to wait

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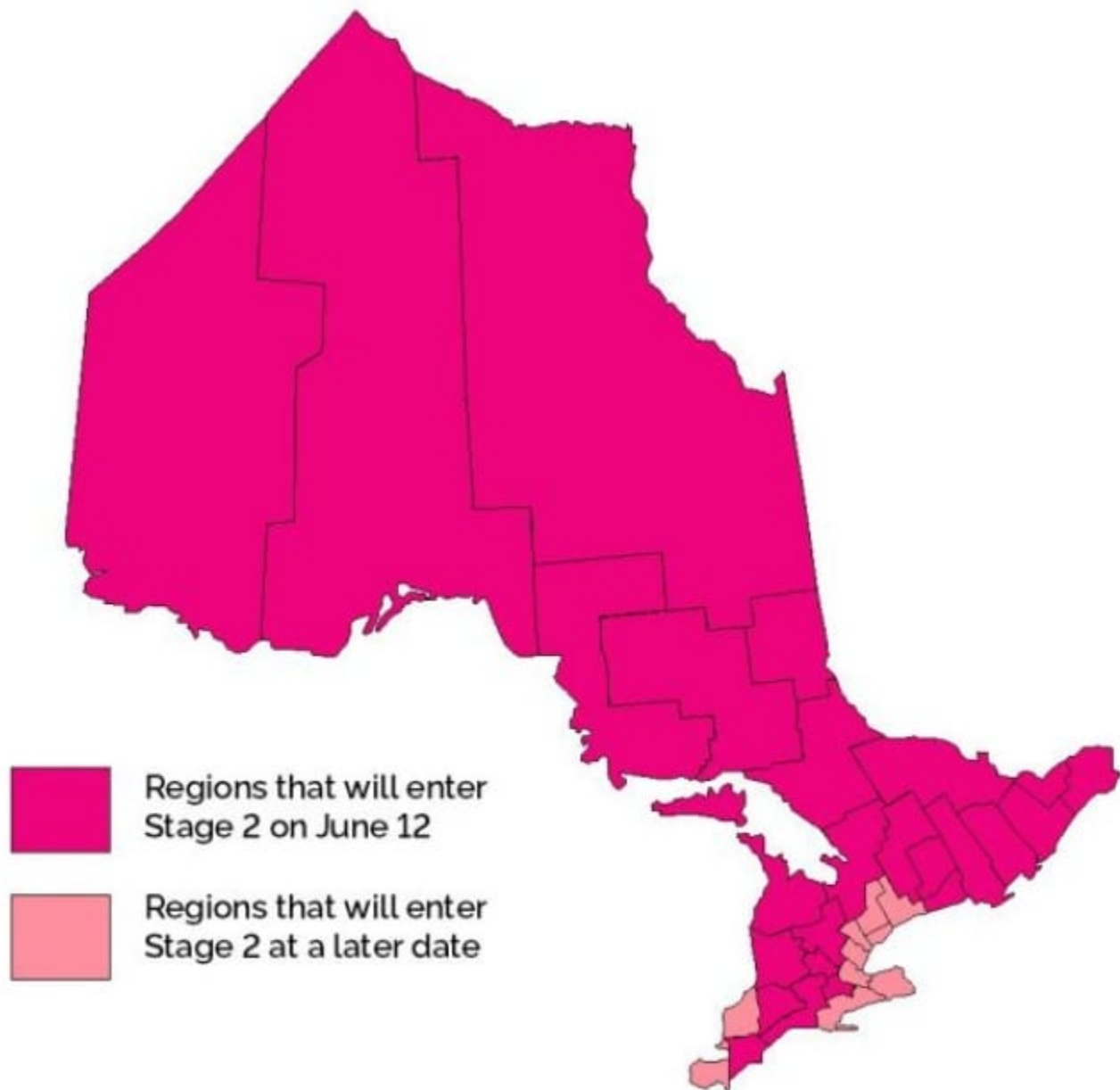
Premier Doug Ford outlined the details of Stage 2 of Ontario's plan to lift restrictions on its lockdown, implemented to help curb the spread of COVID-19, at his daily briefing Monday afternoon.

- ***You can read the government's full Stage 2 plan at the bottom of this story.***

"I know that staying apart from our friends and loved ones has been one of the hardest parts of the last few months," Ford said.

"Hopefully, today's announcement will bring some relief."

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This map shows the public health regions in Ontario that will be allowed to move into the next stage of reopening on Friday. (Government of Ontario)

In addition to increasing the size of social gatherings from five to 10, the government says places of worship will be able to welcome congregants again with a 30 per cent capacity limit. Both changes also take effect on Friday throughout the province, regardless of public health unit.

In areas allowed to move into the next stage, restaurants, bars and food trucks will be able to open for outdoor dining on patios and in parking lots or adjacent premises. The province is allowing licensed establishments to set up or expand their outdoor eating spaces without an application fee to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

Attorney General Doug Downey said the move will give the hospitality sector more tools to be able to recover, and will help ensure physical distancing. The measures for patios will still be subject to municipal approval and will be in place until Jan. 1. The new or expanded patios will have to be adjacent to the bar or restaurant and the capacity doesn't exceed 1.11 square metres per person.

Here is a list of businesses and services allowed to reopen in regions entering Stage 2:

- Select personal and personal care services with the proper health and safety measures in place, including tattoo parlours, barber shops, hair salons and beauty salons.
- Shopping malls under existing restrictions, including food services reopening for takeout and outdoor dining only.
- Tour and guide services, such as biking and walking, bus and boat tours, as well as tastings 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-thru venues for theatres, concerts, animal attractions and cultural appreciation, such as art installations.
- Film and television production activities, with limits to enable physical distancing.
- Weddings and funerals, with limits on social gatherings to 10 people.

Child-care services will shift away from providing solely emergency services throughout the province, regardless of which stage each region is in, allowing for a gradual reopening of regular service. The province says there will be a limit on operational capacity and other strict public health measures that will need to stay in place.

Ford said more information will be announced on Tuesday.