

Reopening Canada: A Guide for the Construction Industry in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec

As Canada continues to flatten the COVID-19 infection curve, provinces are beginning to reopen their economies. Provincial governments have released phased approaches to increase the number of essential businesses and allow more individuals to return to work. While British Columbia and Alberta and other provinces allowed construction to continue throughout its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario and Quebec limited construction projects to essential work. The construction industry now faces a province-by-province approach to revamping their projects.

The paragraphs below set out key guidelines released to date for the continued operation and/or reopening of the construction industry. We will be updating this summary as reopening plans are announced or update. Please click here [\[insert hyperlink\]](#) for a PDF version and visit our [COVID-19 Recovery Hub](#) for regular updates.

For general guidelines applicable to all businesses, please see our [COVID-19 recovery and reopening tracker](#).

British Columbia

In British Columbia, construction work, construction firms, skilled trades, and professionals, as well as construction and light industrial machinery and equipment rental are considered [essential services](#).

Key Dates and Updates

- **April 29:** Premier Horgan extended the provincial state of emergency for two weeks.
- **May 6:** Premier Horgan announced a four phased reopening plan. B.C. is currently in Phase 1 of the reopening plan. Phase 2 is expected to begin mid-May and includes small social gatherings, resumption of additional health services, opening provincial parks, opening more non-essential businesses and recalling the legislature.
- **May 7, 2020:** The Government of British Columbia announced that Phase 2 of the Restart Plan is scheduled to begin after the May long weekend ([link](#)).
- **May 19, 2020:** British Columbia entered Phase 2 of the Restart Plan.

Workplace Safety Guidelines

On March 22, 2020, the Government of British Columbia released an [Information Bulletin](#) providing guidance to construction sites operating during COVID-19:

- Where possible, employees should maintain a distance of two metres apart from each other.
- Employers should post signage that limits the number of occupants in an elevator to four people at a time.
- Employers should reduce in-person meetings and other gatherings, and hold site meetings in open spaces or outside.
- Employers should increase the number of handwashing stations and post signage that identifies their location.

- Employers should maintain a list of employees that are currently working on sites, and update this list daily.
- All common areas and surfaces (e.g. washrooms, shared offices, common tables, desks, light switches, door handles, etc.) should be cleaned at the end of each day.
- Anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms must self-isolate at home for 14 days.
- Employers must reassess their work environment every day and keep updated with the COVID-19 information posted on the Province's website.

Physical Distancing

- Personal hygiene, including hand washing, physical distancing and staying at home if you are sick, is featured at every phase of the Restart Plan.
- Under Phase 2, small gatherings are permitted.
- There should be no more than 50 people in the same space in any circumstances.

Alberta

In Alberta, construction projects and services are [considered essential services](#). The construction industry has continued to operate subject to the orders and guidance of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Key Updates and Dates

- **April 30:** Alberta announced a [three stage restart strategy](#). The first stage of the strategy is slated for May 14 and includes the reopening of retail businesses, personal service businesses, museums, art galleries, daycares and restaurants under reduced capacity.
- **May 7:** The Government of Alberta released workplace guidance for re-opening businesses.
- **May 14, 2020**: Stage one of Alberta's relaunch plan began May 14, 2020 and allows for the resumption of operations in several sectors ([link](#)).
- **May 15, 2020**: Limits on outside gatherings which were previously restricted to 15 people have increased to a maximum of 50 people.
- **June 5:** [The Government of Alberta released updated Guidance for Managers and Operators of Industrial Work Camps \(link\)](#).
- **June 12:** [Stage two of Alberta's relaunch plan includes the following gathering restrictions: 50 people maximum for indoor social gatherings; 100 people maximum for outdoor events and indoor seated/audience events.](#)

Workplace Safety Guidelines

On March 27, 2020, the Chief Medical Officer of Health issued [Order 07-2020](#) which requires that any place of business that remains open during the COVID-19 pandemic must:

- Prevent the risk of transmission of infection to co-workers and members of the public by a worker or member of the public.
- Provide for rapid response if a worker or member of the public develops symptoms of illness while at the place of business.
- Maintain high levels of workplace and worker hygiene.

On April 7, 2020, the Government of Alberta [released workplace guidance](#) for continuing and re-opening businesses:

- Employers should post information relating to reducing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Employees demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19 should not report to work and should be sent home if they do report to work. The workplace should be cleaned and disinfected.
- Employers should conduct hazard assessments on all tasks performed in the business.
- Employers should implement active daily screening of workers.
- Employers should maintain a list of who was working onsite at a given time and in what role to ensure the ability to conduct contact tracing.
- Employers should promote good hygiene and clean and disinfect all services frequently, especially in high traffic areas and high-touch or shared surfaces.
- Where a hazard cannot be controlled, employers should first consider re-engineering the space, then making administrative changes, and finally providing personal protective equipment if necessary.
- At work camps, managers and operators should restrict visitors, manage a list of all visitors and their contact information, provide tissues and lined (preferably no-touch) garbage bins, post signage with COVID-19 information posters and AHS Infection Prevention and Control posters.

Physical Distancing

- Social gatherings of more than ~~50~~100 people are prohibited.
- ~~Workplaces~~A business that is not otherwise restricted or ordered to close can have more than 50 people ~~but~~onsite at an indoor location and more than 100 people onsite at and outdoor location.
- Workers must maintain physical distancing and reduce the risk of transmission. While workers may work at a distance closer than 2 metres, risk mitigation strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 must be implemented and followed. Examples of reducing the risk of transmission include installing physical barriers, increasing separation between workstations, eliminating or re-structuring non-essential gatherings, limiting the number of people in a shared space, and limiting hours of operation.
- Gatherings of fewer than ~~50~~100 people must continue to follow personal physical distancing rules of remaining two metres apart.
- Working remotely continues to be advised, where possible.
- In work camps, all reasonable steps must be taken to maintain a distance of at least 2 meters between individuals at all times.

Ontario

As of May 19 all construction activities, projects and related services are [essential services](#) in Ontario. Land surveyors are also considered essential. All non-essential business remain closed.

Key Dates and Updates

- **April 4:** Construction was removed from the list of essential workplaces, with the exception of services required for healthcare, critical infrastructure, critical industrial activities and some residential projects.
- **May 1:** the Ontario government announced an expansion to the list of essential workplaces and services in the construction industry effective May 4, including projects related to education, logistics and preparing institutional, commercial, industrial or residential sites.
- **May 4:** an expanded list of essential construction services became effective.
- **May 11:** The list of essential construction services was expanded to include most work relating to residential developments.
- **May 14:** the Ontario government announced Stage 1 of Ontario's reopening will begin on Tuesday May 19, 2020 at 12:01am and will include lifting essential workplace limits on construction.
- **May 19:** All construction activities are considered essential services and can resume
- **May 22:** The province announced it is permitting Ontario Corporations to conduct virtual meetings and to defer certain annual meetings in specified circumstances as part of the *COVID-19 Response and Reforms to Modernize Ontario Act, 2020*.
- [June 12: Stage 2 of Ontario's reopening plan allows for mass gatherings of up to 10 people.](#)

Provincial Guidelines

The government has released a set of [guidelines for construction site health and safety during COVID-19.](#)

- Any worker who has any symptoms related to cold, flu, or COVID-19 should be sent home.
- If an employer is advised that a worker has tested positive for COVID-19 due to exposure at the workplace, or that a claim has been filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the employer is required to notify:
 - the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in writing within four days.
 - the workplace joint health and safety committee or a health and safety representative.
 - a trade union (if applicable).
- All COVID-19 policies should be posted by employers and constructors.
- Employers should focus on on-site sanitization including access to soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer, sanitizing commonly touched surfaces, avoiding the sharing of tools and posting signage on hygiene.
- Employers should adjust on-site and production schedules to encourage physical distancing.
- Employers should track where employees have worked.
- There are additional sector-specific guidance notes for the construction industry, including guidance on hygiene, guidance on construction supervisor responsibilities, and best practices for responding to a suspected COVID-19 exposure. These additional guidelines are available [here.](#)

[On June 16, the government released a new general workplace guide aimed at helping employers develop workplace safety plans. The toolkit includes safety guidelines and helpful posters with tips for 28 distinct sectors, including construction.](#)

Physical Distancing Guidelines

- Gatherings of more than five people are prohibited. Essential businesses are exempt from this prohibition but should encourage physical-distancing and curtail non-essential operations of the business.
- Employers should consider the following to ensure physical distancing: staggering start time, breaks and lunches, restricting the number of people on-site, controlling site movements, limiting the number of people in elevators, holding meetings outside or in large spaces and limiting unnecessary on-site contact.

Quebec

The construction industry in Quebec was subject to a full shut-down on March 23. The industry subsequently fully reopened on May 11.

- **March 23:** Quebec announced the closure of all non-essential services, including the entire construction industry.
- **April 20:** Residential construction work scheduled for completion by July 31, 2020 was allowed to resume.
- **April 28:** The Quebec government announced that all construction activities can restart.
- **May 11:** The construction industry re-opened in Quebec.
- **June 1:** Additional businesses will be able to reopen.
- **June 3:** The Quebec government introduced [Bill 61](#), “An Act to restart Québec’s economy and to mitigate the consequences of the public health emergency [declared on 13 March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)”. This bill principally aims at accelerating 202 infrastructure projects by simplifying certain rules relating to public contracts, environmental rules, expropriation rules and requirements dealing with land development. These projects are in the areas of education, healthcare, roads, collective transportation and sustainable development. Additional public and private-sector projects may be added to this list by decree in order to also benefit from the acceleration measures provided for in the bill, notably in the areas of public infrastructure, municipal projects, and projects which increase medical and food self-sufficiency.
- [June 12: The Quebec government failed to get unanimous support for Bill 61 on second reading. The review of Bill 61 will therefore continue in the next session.](#)
- [June 22: Indoor gatherings of up to 50 people will be allowed in some public places.](#)

Provincial Guidelines

The CNESST established a [COVID-19 guide for construction sites](#) which sets forth measures to reduce transmission of COVID-19. Principal contractors and employers must notably, take the following measures to protect the health of workers at construction sites:

- On a daily basis, validate the health of each of their workers arriving at the construction site, by asking the following questions:
 - Do you have any of these symptoms: cough, fever, difficulty breathing, sudden loss of smell?
 - Have you been out of the country in the last 2 weeks?
 - Are you in contact with someone who has COVID-19?Should the answer be yes to any of these questions, the worker must be sent home.



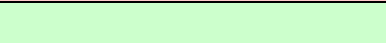
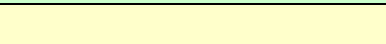
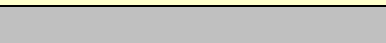
- Make every effort to ensure that work is arranged in such a way that workers can maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from each other and that during arrival at the work site, breaks, meals and departure from the work site, physical distance of 2 meters is observed.
- Transportation vehicles should be operated at half the seating capacity however, having 2 workers in the same vehicle is permitted.
- Comply with the hygiene measures for construction sites set forth in the COVID-19 guide for construction sites.

Physical Distancing Guidelines

- [As of June 22, indoor gatherings of up to 50 people will be allowed in some public places.](#)
- Outdoor gatherings in groups up to [1050](#) people ~~from three households~~ are permitted.
- If physical distancing cannot be respected for more than 15 minutes without a physical barrier at construction sites, measures must be taken to protect the workers such as wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) including surgical masks and protective eyewear.

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