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PROVINCIAL POLITICS

COVID-19 restrictions could continue after state of emergency ends, Doug Ford says

By **Robert Benzie** Queen's Park Bureau Chief

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Some COVID-19 restrictions could remain in place even after Ontario's state of emergency is expected to expire on July 15, warns Premier Ford.

Ford, who is seeking an extension to the emergency declaration that began March 17 and was supposed to end June 30, said Thursday that additional measures may be necessary.

“Hopefully this will be the last time,” the premier told reporters at his daily teleconference.

“Any (emergency) orders we take off we can’t put back on, but the ones that are in place can continue moving forward so that’s how that works.”

Under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, emergency orders — such as limiting large gatherings of people and preventing some businesses from opening — can continue after the termination of an emergency declaration.

However, those orders cannot be amended in any way.

Ford said the government is reviewing dozens of emergency orders that have been issued over the past three months to determine what should remain on the books after the state of emergency is over.

While MPPs will debate the proposed July 15 extension to the state of emergency next week, the majority Progressive Conservative government could always make legislative or regulatory changes instead of using temporary emergency orders.

According to the Health Protection and Promotion Act, local medical officers of health maintain their considerable powers over openings and closures regardless of whether Ontario is in a state of emergency.

With most of the province — other than the city of Toronto, Peel Region and Windsor-Essex — in the second stage of reopening the economy as of Friday, Ford emphasized that regional public health departments can always slam on the brakes if they see fit.

Restaurants in Halton, Durham, York and Hamilton can begin serving eat-in meals on patios Friday, while those in Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton and Windsor remain limited to serving takeout food and booze. Similarly, hair salons and barbershops can open in parts of the GTA outside of the city and Peel.

If Toronto's coronavirus cases subside somewhat over the weekend, the premier is widely expected to announce Monday that restrictions can be loosened here as of June 26.



Robert Benzie is the Star's Queen's Park bureau chief and a reporter covering Ontario politics. Follow him on Twitter: [@robertbenzie](https://twitter.com/robertbenzie)

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