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# Restaurants, cafes and bars in Alberta reopen for dine-in service with restrictions



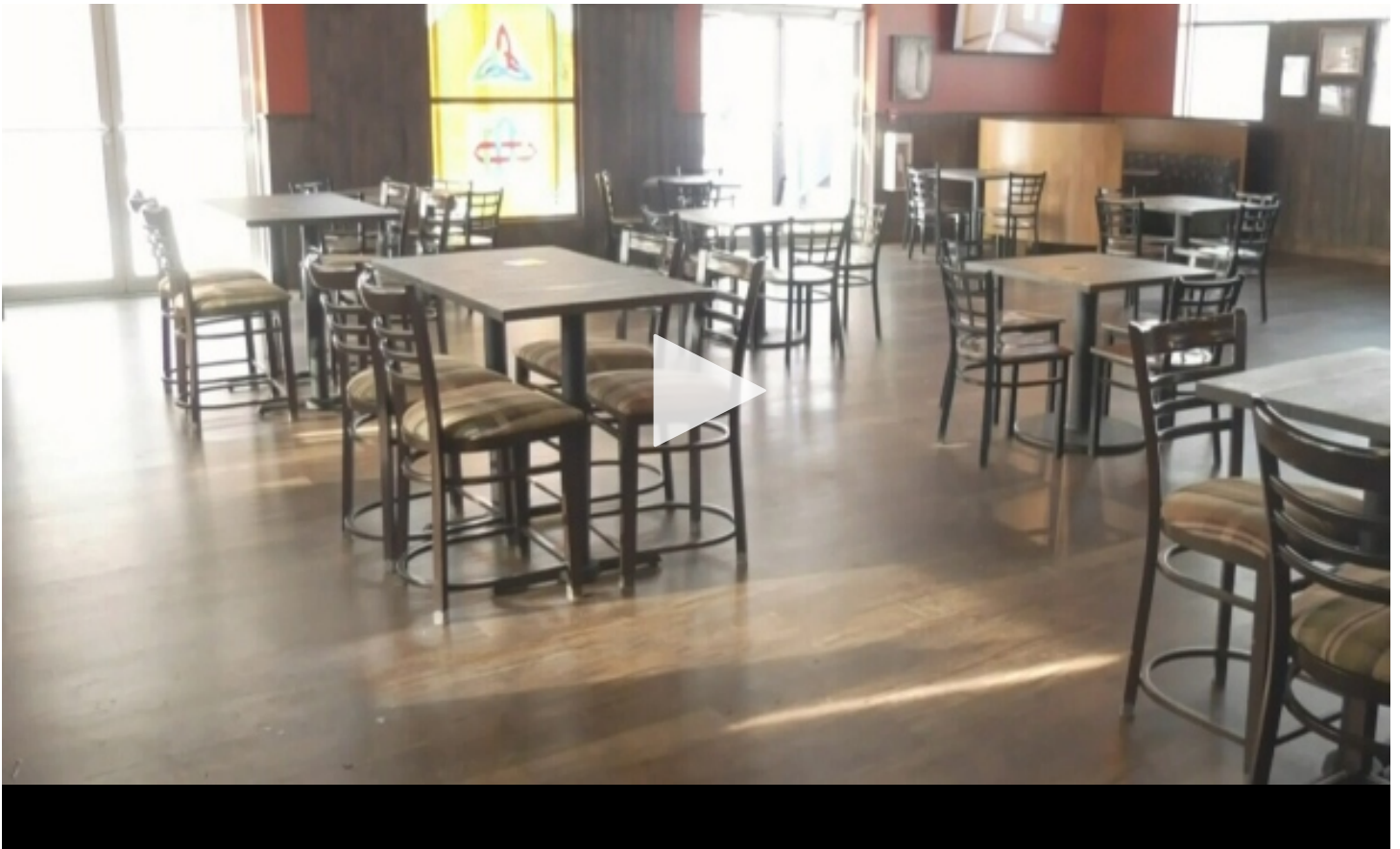
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CALGARY -- Following the mandated stoppage of in-person dining in Alberta restaurants and multiple accounts of businesses defying public health guidelines, restaurants and bars can once again offer dine-in service.

It's been nearly two months since guests could sit down at a table to eat or drink in Alberta restaurants, but, as of Monday, they are permitted to reopen with health restrictions in place.

Provincial officials shut down food establishments to dine-in service on Dec.13, 2020, following an unsettling trend of COVID-19 infections and increased hospitalizations.

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Several restaurants in rural Alberta defied restrictions throughout January, reopening their businesses to dine-in service and going against the public health advice.

The Whistlestop Cafe in Mirror, Alta. and the Mossleigh Bar & Grill were just two restaurants of the many that defied the restrictions.

Owners were slapped with fines and tickets and told CTV news they could not stay closed any longer due to the massive financial hit faced.

Under the reopening structure, the province says each establishment must collect contact information from one person from each dining party.

Tables can have up to six people as long as they are all from the same household. Those who live alone are permitted to dine with two close contacts.

Bars and restaurants will be required to stop serving liquor at 10 p.m. daily and must close to customers by 11 p.m.

The lifting of restrictions are part of Step 1 of the province's reopening plan, which will remain in place as long as COVID-19-related hospitalizations in Alberta remain under 600.

Currently there are 434 people in hospital with COVID-19 including 81 in intensive care.

A potential move to Step 2 will be considered on Feb. 28 if hospitalizations remain under 450. The province would then consider easing restrictions in retail, banquet halls, hotels and indoor fitness.

The province says it will only move to the next steps of its reopening plan following three weeks where hospitalizations remained below the target numbers.

Bobby's Place Pub in the southeast community of Legacy is family-owned and first opened its doors on March 12 of last year.

Five days later it was shut due to a global pandemic.

"There's been a lot of tears, there's been a lot of heartbreak," said owner Lynn Cullen.

"Laying off my staff, laying off my own family."

Suffering through multiple shutdowns, Cullen is hopeful this time they can remain open to dine in service, as hospitalizations and infections dwindle.

"That is the whole purpose of this industry is to have those customers here, be able to serve them (and) make them happy," she said.

"Whether they are having a good day or bad day, make them leave a little bit happier."

At Lulu bar on 17th Avenue S.W., there was a sense of relief as staff can get back to work, and entertain customers.

General manager Amy Campbell says take-out and delivery has been popular, but does not make up for financial shortfalls.

"It's definitely been a long couple months," she said.

"We're excited to see everyone's half covered face."

The Alberta Hospitality Association says it is still in dialogue with the province to see what additional supports can be given to the eatery sector including wage and rent subsidies.

Board member Jeff Jamieson, who is also co-owner of Donna Mac restaurant, says a new businesses like Bobby's Place need support as well through grants, which is something new businesses do not currently qualify for.

"The government needs to address that and make sure those people that did start their businesses during this pandemic receive at the very least the same capability to access funds as the rest of us," he said.