

York Region enters Stage 3 Friday

Nearly all businesses and public spaces in York Region will get the green light to re-open as of 12.01 a.m. this Friday.

On Monday, Premier Doug Ford, accompanied by Deputy Premier ? and Newmarket-Aurora MPP ? Christine Elliott and Finance Minister Rod Phillips announced York Region was set to join most of Ontario in the next phase of re-opening on July 24.

As part of the next phase, indoor gathering limits will increase to a maximum of 50 people and outdoor gathering limits will increase to a maximum of 100 people, while all gathering limits are subject to physical distancing requirements. Here in York, face masks or coverings remain required in all indoor public spaces through November.

?Over the weekend, hundreds of restaurants and bars, gyms, theatres, and personal care services, hundreds of businesses in 24 regions across the Province opened the doors again,? said Premier Ford on Monday afternoon. ?This is good news. It is a clear sign that we're on the right track. It is a clear sign that we're making steady progress. Tens of thousands of people are getting back to work, but we can't stop ? and we won't rest until all of Ontario gets to Stage 3. We won't stop until every worker in Ontario gets back to work and back on their feet. Today, we have more good news for Ontario families, businesses, and communities.

?We know as a Province we can't ease up. We can't give this virus an absolute inch and part of the process is learning from other jurisdictions about what works and what doesn't work. We're always prepared to take additional steps to strengthen public health measures based on the advice of our experts. We have to stay vigilant and we have to stick together.

?It starts with simple actions: visiting your local restaurant or small business, shopping local, buying Ontario-made when you're out at the grocery store or hardware store because if we all take those simple actions, we can make a big, big difference. Billions of dollars in economic activity, more jobs, more opportunity, the chance to build a better life for you and your family. We all have a part to play in rebuilding this Province together.?

Ms. Elliott, who also serves as the Province's Health Minister, said that in order to get to Stage 3, thanks need to go out for the ?considerable and ongoing efforts of all Ontarians.?

?Thanks to the considerable and ongoing efforts of all Ontarians to stop the spread of COVID-19, seven more Regions will enter Stage 3 this Friday,? she said. ?This is in recognition of positive local trends and public health indicators and a decision that was made in consultation with our Chief Medical Officer of Health. Physical distancing, wearing face coverings, practicing good hand hygiene and keeping our social circle safe ? they will all remain critical as we continue to safely re-open Ontario, as will case and contact management.?

Wayne Emmerson, Chair of the Region of York, reiterated these sentiments on Monday afternoon.

?On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York I want to personally thank our 1.2 million residents who have each done their part to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities,? he said. ?Thanks to your efforts even more businesses can begin to re-open, more residents can get back to work and we can get back to some of the activities we have previously enjoyed.

?While this is great news for our residents and our local economy, it has never been more important for us to continue to take steps to keep ourselves, each other, our families and our communities safe. This includes staying at home when feeling ill, maintaining physical distancing, washing your hands frequently with soap and water and wearing a two-layer face mask or covering when physical distancing is not possible. Throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic York Region has remained committed to protecting the health and safety of all residents while taking prudent measures to stop the spread of this virus.

?Entering Stage 3 re-opening takes us one step closer to returning to the next normal and I extend my sincere appreciation to all who

have helped us get here while continuing to build a strong, caring, safe York Region.?

Part of this approach to the 'next normal' will be facilitated through new medical systems designed to track the virus, Ms. Elliott noted.

The Province has been working to implement a new case and contact management system tailor-made for COVID-19 symptoms, she said. The new system, which runs on Cloud-based software, has been rolled out in a handful of public health units and the rollout will continue week to week.

'By implementing this new system, we can enable local public health units to accelerate case and contact management to quickly identify new cases and more effectively contain the spread of COVID-19,' said Ms. Elliott. 'Doing so builds on our government's ongoing efforts to protect the health and wellbeing of all Ontarians.'

By Brock Weir