

Stay-at-home orders in place for four weeks

A third wave has brought a third stay-at-home order from the Province.

Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott announced the four-week stay-at-home order, effective just after midnight on April 8, on Wednesday afternoon.

Under the new restrictions, which go hand-in-hand with the measures announced last week as part of the Province-wide 'emergency brake,' all businesses must ensure that any employee who can work from home does so rather than coming into the workplace; individuals are urged to restrict travel outside their home region and only leave their homes for essential purposes such as going to get groceries or pharmacy items; and to attend medical appointments.

Additionally, new rules address retail with grocery stores and pharmacies allowed to continue in-person shopping with restrictions and capacity limits, while big box retailers will be restricted to selling essential items such as groceries, pharmaceutical items, healthcare and personal care items, and pet care supplies.

Further restrictions are applied to non-essential retail limited to delivery and curbside, while malls will be restricted as well.

'As we ramp up our vaccine distribution, we also need to make sure we take the steps necessary to slow the spread of the virus and protect our ICU and hospital capacity,' said Premier Ford, noting that mobile vaccinations will soon come online for eligible residents 18+ in high-risk neighbourhoods while all education workers in the high-risk areas of Toronto and Peel will be brought forward in the vaccine rollout.

'The reality is despite everything we have done so far, the COVID-19 situation in Ontario is getting worse as these new variants continue to spread,' the Premier continued. 'Our hospitals are reaching capacity and patients in the GTA must now be sent to other parts of the Province for care. Right now, above all else, our plan is to get needles into arms and protect our hospitals. That is why' on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, I am declaring a state of emergency with a Province-wide stay-at-home order.

'To boil it down as simple as possible, unless it is for an essential reason, please stay home because the situation is extremely serious and we just need to hunker down right now. We need to limit mobility. Non-essential retail stores will go back to curbside pickup with delivery allowed from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Big box and discount stores will be allowed to sell essential items only such as food, medicine, cleaning supplies, and personal care items. During the stay-at-home orders, residential evictions will once again be suspended because no one should live in fear of losing their homes.

'I know this is tough on business, but I promise we will continue to have your backs.'

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter