

York Region returns to 'modified' Stage 2 on Monday

York Region will return to a 'modified' Stage 2 of the Province's plan to re-open Ontario on Monday.

Premier Doug Ford, alongside Health Minister and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott, made the announcement in Mississauga on Friday afternoon as the Region sees another spike in new cases of COVID-19.

Effective Monday, October 19, at 12.01 a.m., the new modified measures will come into effect for 28 days.

These new measures include limiting all social gatherings and organized public events to a maximum of 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors where physical distancing can be maintained, the prohibition of indoor food and drink service in restaurants, bars and other establishments, and the closing of indoor gyms and fitness centres; casinos and other gaming establishments; indoor movie theatres, performing arts venues; and the prohibition of personal care services where face coverings must be removed, such as makeup applications and beard trimming.

'By all accounts, the indicators are going in the wrong direction,' said Premier Ford on Friday. 'We're seeing a rapid increase in the rate of infection. With the positivity rate of 2.77 per cent above the high alert threshold of 2.5 per cent, cases per 100,000 in York are now nearly 39, well above the provincial average. Similar to what we have seen in the worst hotspots, most concerning of all, critical care admissions are reaching alarming levels.'

'This was not an easy decision to make and I know this will be very, very difficult for many people to hear, but we can't allow this virus to get into our long-term care homes. We need to protect our schools and our communities. We need to keep performing vital surgeries in our hospitals. We need to stop the spread before things get worse. We need to avoid a full lockdown. We took the same decisive action with Toronto, Ottawa, Peel Region, when we saw the same alarming trends.'

The Province, he added, will 'spare no expense' to help business owners get through the duration of Stage 2.

'They have done everything right,' he said. 'They deserve our support as we do what is needed to get the spread of COVID-19 under control and I ask all the people in York Region [to] please support your local businesses, please support each other through this, because together we will get through this.'

Added Ms. Elliott: 'The trends we have seen in York Region are going in the wrong direction. Numbers have jumped and we need to do everything we can to avoid a very severe second wave. This was not an easy decision and I say this as a member from York Region. However, that is how fast this pandemic is progressing through a second wave. I know that we are asking very real sacrifices of Ontarians, but this is about potentially preventing something much worse. We need to act now to keep our schools open, to protect our seniors and loved ones in long-term care, and to avoid the need for harsher measures in the future.'

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter