

## Active COVID-19 cases in Aurora remains in single digits as Region rates follow

The number of active cases of COVID-19 within the Aurora community remains in the single digits.

As of Thursday, August 20, Aurora is grappling with just 3 active cases of the virus.

Over the past week, the Region of York has reported 2 new cases in Aurora, bringing the community's total number of confirmed cases to 143, with 125 cases now marked as recovered.

Of the active cases, 2 are related to local transmission or close contact while the remaining case is attributed to an institutional outbreak outside Aurora.

"Today, we have a lot to celebrate," said Dr. Fareen Karachiwalla, Associate Medical Officer of Health for the Region of York in their weekly update on Monday. "We continue to see a decrease in the number of new COVID-19 cases in York Region. Over the past week, we have averaged around four new cases per day and, amazingly, we have had no deaths from COVID-19 since August 1. This remarkable progress is because of all of your collective action. Thank you to all of our residents for remaining vigilant."

"With these lower rates, the risk of acquiring the virus has reduced and we're starting to navigate our way through the safe reopening of many settings, including schools, which we know is top of mind for so many families. We continue to work very closely with our long-standing partners at the school boards to support the safe reopening of schools, something we know is so vital to the wellbeing of our students and our communities. Parents and families are engaging in important discussions to make an individualized decision about the return to school and we encourage you to speak to your children about what the school year may look like for them."

Each family, she said, should make the decision they feel most comfortable with "based on their own unique set of circumstances."

"A range of different things can be thought through when it comes to these conversations," Dr. Karachiwalla continued. "For example, we know the risk of community transition is low at the moment but this risk is never zero and is always subject to change. We do expect to see some cases occurring in school settings, but we are well prepared to promptly respond."

"We also know that going to school has many benefits beyond learning and development. Physically, emotionally and mentally. Also, think through health issues specific to your family, like whether your child or someone they live with is at higher risk of COVID-19 because of a pre-existing health condition, having a weakened immune system, or being older in age."

Dr. Karachiwalla added that throughout the school year York Region Public Health will continue to plan an active role within schools to execute strategies to limit transmission, provide guidance on how to screen potentially sick staff and students so they do not attend school, and adapt the school environment for distancing and limiting visitors.

"There is a lot we can do now to ensure community rates stay low into the fall," Dr. Karachiwalla conclude. "Our cornerstones of prevention remain frequent and thorough hand washing, maintaining physical distancing with anyone you interact with outside of your immediate social circle, and promptly self-isolating and getting tested [at] our three COVID assessment centres (at York Region's three hospitals)."

"Beyond this, getting lots of sleep, regular exercise, reducing or stopping smoking and talking to your healthcare provider about supports for that, and enjoying the outdoors and time together safely can help ensure we are well-nourished with a strong immune system. Every one of us doing our part today will help support a safer return to school in September."

To date, there are 111 active cases of COVID-19 in York Region. Since the start of the pandemic, York Region has seen a total of 3,371 cases of the virus, 252 of which have proved fatal. 3,008 cases are now marked as recovered.

**By Brock Weir**