

Aurora reports zero active cases of COVID-19 on Friday

For the first time since the early spring, there are zero active cases of COVID-19 within the Aurora community.

The latest figures were reported by the Region of York on Friday and this update included the welcome news that the institutional outbreak at Cobblestone Lodge, first reported Tuesday, is now closed. At the time, the Region said there was one case of COVID-19 amongst its caregiver complement of six and no cases amongst its residential population of 19.

To date, Aurora has a total of 143 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, with 15 confirmed deaths. A total of 128 cases are now marked as recovered.

At the start of the week, the Region reiterated its focus on contact tracing.

As parents prepare to send their kids back to school next week, if that is the choice they made, the Public Health Unit reiterated its support for plans to re-open classrooms.

On Monday, Dr. Lana Fitzgerald-Husek, York Region's Associate Medical Officer of Health, said the decision facing parents has been a ?difficult one? and York Region Public Health ?will continue to play an active role in helping to limit transmission in school settings and?investigate all cases of COVID-19.?

?We know it has been difficult making decisions about whether or not your child will attend school in person or participate in online learning,? she said. ?We know the importance of school for children's overall mental, social, physical and emotional development.

?Public Health has longstanding partnership with public, Catholic and French school boards and with private and independent schools in York Region. These relationships are so important as we navigate this complex, evolving COVID-10 environment. We remain committed to working with schools and school boards and supporting children, parents and educational workers in a safe return to York Region classrooms.?

Public Health, added Dr. Fitzgerald-Husek, will continue to follow ?the lead and guidance? of the Province and provide input.?

Tackling communicable diseases in school settings over the years, including measles and whooping cough, have been ?beneficial? experiences in determining how to manage COVID-19 cases and contacts in schools, she said.

?We take case management and contact tracing very seriously. While we anticipate that some cases of COVID-19 may occur in school settings, we know we are well prepared to promptly and effectively respond. If a student, for example, tests positive for COVID-19, York Region Public Health will conduct an in-depth investigation to identify close contacts of a case. Contact tracing is an effective tool to slow and control the spread. In the school setting, close contacts are more likely to be students and teachers in the same class or cohort, siblings of the case in different grades, or other school staff with close contact to the case while the case was infectious. Close contacts outside of the school will also be followed up.

?Public Health will directly get in touch with close contacts of a confirmed case to advise on important public health measures such as testing, self isolation and symptom monitoring. There will also be communication with students, parents and the schools? Each situation may be unique and evaluated on a case by case basis and we will continue to follow established communicable disease prevention and control practices and additional guidance on COVID-19 in schools that is forthcoming from the Province.?

By Brock Weir