

House parties, weddings attributed to uptick in York Region COVID-19 cases

As the number of new cases of COVID-19 across Ontario in a single day went up to more than 300 for the first time since June on Monday, York Region has attributed an uptick in local cases to recent house parties and weddings.

Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, described the increase as 'steady but slow' in his Monday briefing on the virus, but said it is up to us to 'work together' to keep numbers down.

'When we look at our analysis, it appears that a large number of these individuals can be attributed to having acquired it from house parties and weddings,' he said. 'The numbers at these house parties may have been such that physical distancing was impossible. We have found that the attack rates at some of these house parties can be as much as 40 per cent. Given that, it is prudent that we reduce numbers greatly at any of these house parties [and] we understand that the Public Health Measures Table at the Province is reconsidering the limits on indoor gatherings.'

The Region has also seen an increased number of workplace outbreaks, with 10 such outbreaks reported in York Region as of Monday and 25 further locations 'under surveillance.'

'It is very important that business owners take into account all the safety measures that they need to keep their employees safe,' said Dr. Kurji. 'In addition, employees should refrain from going to work should they have symptoms of COVID-19, even though they may be mild, for we have had instances of individuals being in the workplace for two to three days before being isolated.'

SCHOOL NUMBERS

As classes continue to resume across the community, the Region has updated its online COVID-19 dashboard at [York.ca](#) to include data on 'suspect' and confirmed cases in schools and other places of learning.

Should an outbreak be confirmed, it will be declared in a school setting when, within a 14-day period, there are two or more laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in students, staff, or 'other visitors with an epidemiological link (if cases are in the same class or cohort) or if at least one case could have been infected in the school.'

A case deemed 'under surveillance' in this case means schools with a laboratory-confirmed case of the virus among staff or students but there is no evidence of transmission within the school.

'As our children head back to schools, we have a number of situations which we are closely monitoring,' said Dr. Kurji. 'A preliminary assessment seems to suggest that the measures in place that have been instituted seem to be built-in to keep our children quite safe and there seem to be several layers of protection there. If we adhere to these guidelines rigorously, we should be able to keep our children safe.'

By Brock Weir