

Municipal employees will be required to vaccinate as cases rise again

As new cases of COVID-19 continue to rise across Ontario, the Town of Aurora has implemented mandatory vaccines for all employees.

In a statement released Monday, the Town said the decision was "the best approach to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of both staff and members of the public."

"Our CAO has informed us that, in alignment with recent announcements made by many public and private sector organizations, the Town of Aurora is moving forward with a mandatory vaccination requirement for all Town employees," said Mayor Tom Mrakas. "We believe that it is our responsibility to take this additional step to protect everyone, given the rapidly-changing COVID-19 situation and the pressure that we're under as a region and a province.

"With today's announcement, all Town staff will be asked to provide proof of a first vaccination before October 1, and of both a first and second dose by November 1, unless they have a valid medical or human rights-based exemption."

The decision at Town Hall comes as vaccination rates continue to show signs of slowing across York Region.

In his weekly COVID-19 update, Dr. Richard Gould, York Region's Associate Medical Officer of Health, said as of Monday more than 83 per cent of residents aged 12 and over have received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, while the rate for individuals receiving their second dose stands at 78 per cent.

"We continue to see an increase in COVID-19 cases in our community, especially among those who are not fully vaccinated," said Dr. Gould. "We are in the fourth wave and it is predicted that case numbers will continue to rise into the fall. We have the power to reduce the impact by being vaccinated, continuing to practice public health measures, and implementing additional health measures. It is important for all individuals, vaccinated and unvaccinated, to self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 before heading out into the community."

As schools prepare to welcome staff and students back into the classrooms next week, the Region has launched a new mini-website located at York.ca/safeatschool to give parents additional tools and information to help stop the spread, including when to stay home, how to properly screen before going off to school, how to stay safe in the classrooms, and the most current guidance for schools.

"Currently, eight out of 10 cases of COVID-19 in York Region are either unvaccinated or partially-vaccinated individuals," said Dr. Gould. "These individuals have a greater risk of ending up in hospital and into ICUs. York Region is encouraging everyone born in 2009 or earlier to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

"In addition to encouraging vaccinations, discussions for additional measures to ensure the security and safety of both unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals are ongoing, given the increased transmissibility of the delta variant. The direction for any new measures will be determined in consultation with our partners, government officials, and medical officers of health. Our recent enforcement efforts have shown some businesses have been relaxed in their implementation of COVID-19 health and safety measures. While we know most businesses are doing everything possible to keep their employees and patrons safe from COVID-19, we ask all businesses to ensure essential health and safety measures are being followed."

LOCAL STATISTICS

The number of total cases of COVID-19 among Aurora residents passed the 1,900 threshold on Friday.

As of Tuesday, August 31, the community has seen a total of 1,935 cases of the virus since the start of the global pandemic. 1,845

cases are marked as recovered and there have been 48 fatalities.

Of the 42 active cases, 33 are attributed to local transmission, close contact or unknown exposure, 5 to travel, and 3 to workplace exposure, and 1 to institutional exposure.

There are two open outbreaks.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter