

Ontario moves to Step 3 of re-opening plan this Friday

As the number of new daily cases of COVID-19 continues to drop, Ontario will move into Stage 3 of its Roadmap to Recovery at 12.01 a.m. this Friday, July 16.

The move, which comes five days earlier than what was originally set by the Province last month, was announced last Friday.

Under the revised rules, limits on outdoor social gatherings and organized public events have been raised to a maximum of 100 people with limited exceptions.

Indoor social gatherings and organized public events will now be able to welcome up to 25 people and indoor religious services, including wedding and funeral services, will be permitted with distancing.

Indoor dining will be permitted with no limits on the number of patrons per table, with other rules on physical distancing still in effect.

Indoor sports and recreational fitness facilities will be able to re-open at 50 per cent capacity of indoor space, while spectators will be allowed for indoor sports at 50 per cent of original capacity, or 1,000 people ? whichever is less. Capacity for outdoor spectators will be set at 75 per cent capacity, or 15,000 people ? whichever is less.

Businesses will also be positively impacted with essential and non-essential retailers allowed to open their doors to the number of people who can maintain a physical distance of a minimum of two metres while personal care services requiring the removal of face coverings, will be limited to the number of people that can maintain the necessary physical distance of two metres in the facility.

Cultural spaces, including galleries and landmarks, will be limited to 50 per cent capacity indoors and 75 per cent outdoors, concert venues will be able to operate at 50 per cent capacity to a maximum of 1,000 people, and real estate open houses will be limited to the number of people who can safely practice physical distancing.

?Thanks to the continued efforts of Ontarians adhering to public health measures and advice, as well as going out to get vaccinated, we have seen most key health indicators continue to improve,? said Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario. ?However, the pandemic is not over and we must all remain vigilant and continue following the measures and advice in place, as the Delta variant continues to pose a threat to public health.?

The Province will remain in Step 3 for a minimum of 21 days and until 80 per cent of the eligible population aged 12 and over has received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 75 per cent have received their second, with no public health unit having less than 70 per cent of their population fully vaccinated.

?Ontario has continued to see improvements in key health indicators, allowing the Province to move to Step Three of the Roadmap and safely resume more of the activities we've missed,? said Health Minister Christine Elliott. ?While this is exciting news, we must still remain vigilant and continue to follow the public health measures we know work and keep us safe. Vaccines remain our ticket out off the pandemic, so if you haven't booked your appointment yet, please do so today.?

MORE THAN 55% OF YORK RESIDENTS FULLY VACCINATED

York Region began the week with more than 55 per cent of area residents fully vaccinated against COVID-19. According to Richard Gould, Associate Medical Officer of Health for the Region of York, nearly 90 per cent of York Region residents 12 and up and received at least one dose of a vaccine.

As of July 1, Southlake Regional Health Centre began the process of transferring the management and operation of the COVID-19

vaccine clinic at Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex to York Region Public Health and the Town of Newmarket.

The move comes as the hospital places the focus back on resuming surgeries and other hospital services, according to Arden Krystal, President & CEO of Southlake.

Throughout the pandemic Southlake's Vaccination Steering Committee and many other amazing leaders from across the organization worked with our community partners to set up an Assessment Centre for testing, support local long-term care homes, and open the Ray Twinney Vaccination Centre," she said. "I could not be more grateful to our teams and our partners now that we are finally seeing light at the end of this tunnel as case numbers come down."

Added York Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson: "On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I thank our partners at Southlake for helping to lay the foundation for a strong and aggressive mass vaccination program and for their continued efforts in building a strong, caring and safe community for all. Responding to the COVID-19 global pandemic has required the expertise and cooperation of numerous community partners who have worked collaboratively to protect the health and well-being of York Region's 1.2 million residents and ensure the safe and timely administration of COVID-19 vaccines."

LOCAL STATS

As of Tuesday, July 13, Aurora was dealing with 5 active cases of COVID-19.

Of the active cases 4 are attributed to local transmission, close contact or unknown exposure and 1 is related to travel.

To date, the Town has seen 1,846 confirmed cases of the virus, 1,793 of which are now marked as recovered. There have been 48 fatalities. Of the total cumulative cases, 752 have been linked to variants of concern.

By **Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter