Positive signs as York Region lifts COVID-19 State of Emergency

Little over a week after York Region formally lifted its COVID-19 State of Emergency after more than two years, positive signs continue to be seen on the horizon, according to Dr. Barry Pakes, York Region's Medical Officer of Health.

The Region of York lifted the State of Emergency on April 26 after first declaring it on March 23, 2020.

?More than two years ago, for the first time in the 51-year history of York Region, a Regional state of emergency was declared,? said Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson in a statement. ?At the time, no one could have predicted the devastating impact the COVID-19 global pandemic would have on our residents and communities. As we look forward to resuming services, I again thank and acknowledge our staff, municipalities, residents, business owners and the countless community partners for their commitment and resiliency during these turbulent times.?

Since then, Dr. Pakes says wastewater signals have stabilized and are trending towards a decrease.

?This means while there are still very high levels of COVID-19 present in our community and they are still a significant threat to at risk individuals or the unvaccinated, it is starting to look more and more optimistic as the spring days change to summer,? said Dr. Pakes in his weekly update on the local COVID situation on Monday morning. Unfortunately, our hospitals continue to treat high numbers of patients with COVID-19 as well as other severe illnesses. Things are beginning to stabilize in York Region and across Ontario.

?High vaccination rates in our Region, as well as many people who have had COVID-19, are helping to turn the tide. We must remember that the protection that is offered by the vaccine or by infection itself wanes over time, usually three to five months. Fortunately, protection from hospitalization does seem to persist and according to the most recent evidence it is fairly robust. However, those who are older or immunocompromised or at risk for other reasons will need the protection of a fourth dose. Please stay up to date with your vaccination as we continue to deal with the current wave and prepare for another one in the fall.?

Anyone 12 and older, he said, should have had at least one booster or a third shot and anyone aged 60 and older are now ?strongly encouraged? to book their fourth dose/second booster as soon as possible.

?With York Region's State of Emergency recently lifted, Mother's Day this past weekend, and a holiday long weekend coming near the end of this month, we will be gathering more and more,? he said. ?The weather is also warming up, which allows for outdoor gatherings to become more frequent. Let's continue our approach of taking it outside. This is another way to be safe when seeing our family and friends, particularly those who are older or with other risk factors.

?These past two years have not been easy and seeing our loved ones and friends is important for our mental health and our social wellbeing. If you are ill or have other symptoms, do the right thing and stay home so you don't affect others.?

LOCAL STATS

As of Tuesday, May 10, Aurora was experiencing 42 active PCR-confirmed cases of COVID-19, according to York Region Public Health ? but the true number is likely much higher.

Since the start of the global pandemic, the community has seen a total of 4,785 PCR-confirmed cases of COVID-19, 4,681 of which are now marked as recovered.

There have been 62 fatalities attributed to the virus since March of 2020.

By the start of the week, 90.4 per cent of Aurora residents aged five and up have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

88.3 per cent of residents in the same age bracket have received two doses.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter