

Province-wide lockdown set for Saturday

A Province-wide lockdown will come into effect at 12.01 a.m. on Saturday for a minimum of four weeks.

The new measures, which see the Ontario government impose the 'emergency brake' on their plan to re-open the Province was announced Thursday afternoon.

"We are facing a serious situation and drastic measures are required to contain the rapid spread of the virus, especially the new variants of concern," said Premier Doug Ford. "I know pulling the emergency brake will be difficult on many people across the province, but we must try and prevent more people from getting infected and overwhelming our hospitals. Our vaccine rollout is steadily increasing, and I encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated. That is our best protection against this deadly virus."

According to numbers released by the Province, between March 26 and March 28, case rates have increased by 7.7 per cent to 101.1 cases per 100,000 people and COVID-19 related ICU admissions are over the peak of the second wave.

'The provincewide emergency brake would put in place time-limited public health and workplace safety measures to help to stop the rapid transmission of COVID-19 variants in communities, protect hospital capacity and save lives,' said the Province. 'Measures include, but are not limited to: Prohibiting indoor organized public events and social gatherings and limiting the capacity for outdoor organized public events or social gatherings to a 5-person maximum, except for gatherings with members of the same household (the people you live with) or gatherings of members of one household and one other person from another household who lives alone; Restricting in-person shopping in all retail settings, including a 50 per cent capacity limit for supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers' markets, other stores that primarily sell food and pharmacies, and 25 per cent for all other retail including big box stores, along with other public health and workplace safety measures; and prohibiting personal care services.'

Indoor and outdoor dining will also be prohibited with restaurants, bars and similar establishments limited to take-out, drive-thru and delivery options. Day camps will be required to close and capacity at weddings, funerals and religious services, rites or ceremonies will be limited to 15 per cent occupancy per room indoors.

"Ontario, like many other provinces and jurisdictions around the world, is in the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and immediate action is required to help turn the tide," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Implementing a provincewide emergency brake was not an easy decision to make and is not one we take lightly. As we continue to vaccinate more Ontarians, the end is in sight, but right now these necessary measures will help to stop the spread of variants in our communities, protect capacity in our health care system, and save lives."

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter