

Region asks seniors to stay home as Town closes public spaces

People 70 and over are being told to stay home as the fight against COVID-19 continues.

This was the message delivered by both Premier Doug Ford and Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, at the start of the week, as positive cases in York Region sailed past 200 over the weekend.

As of April 3, twelve of York Region's cases were located in Aurora.

Six of the Aurora cases are travel-related, one is a case of close contact, one is confirmed as a local transmission, one is related to an institutional outbreak, and three remain under investigation.

“We have had 237 cases so far, with twelve in healthcare workers,” Dr. Kurji told media in a virtual press conference on Monday afternoon. “We have had two long-term care homes and we have one group home for the developmentally challenged that have been affected.”

Both of the long-term care homes impacted are located in Markham, with the group home situated in Richmond Hill.

Dr. Kurji noted that the York Region Health Unit is looking at two clusters in Vaughan – Body Barre and the gym at the Al Palladini Community Centre. He encourages anyone who was at Body Barre between March 9 and March 15, and the Al Palladini Community Centre between March 7 and March 15 to contact York Region Public Health.

“We keep on being vigilant with respect to intelligence on any other clusters that may have developed,” he said.

Presently, new travel-related cases are “probably declining”, said Dr. Kurji on the most current data, but “this isn't totally evident.”

“When we look at the local transmission cases through there is a mixed picture here,” he said. “We want to especially emphasize to the community to continue with the physical distancing, which is very important because together we will get over this. The advice here would be anyone over the age of 70, please stay home. Only go out if it is essential. Try and do your shopping over the internet or over the phone, and try to get friends, family and neighbours to assist you, but make sure you keep two metres away from anyone who comes to your home. We are asking that we be a little careful and mindful of keeping our physical distances from our [grandparents] as well and for the general public, we're asking that you

stay home as much as you possibly can and only go out for essential things.

?Essential things

mean health service or health care needs, going to the pharmacist, picking up shopping, but otherwise stay home. If you do go out for a walk, be very sure that you're keeping two metres away from everybody else. In addition, at this time of the year, folks have colds, sometimes flu, and sometimes you don't know if you have COVID-19 or not. We are asking those with mild symptoms to self-isolate at home, make sure that close contacts, which are usually household contacts, also self-isolate for 14 days, and then work through the people you might have had close contact with two days prior to the onset of your symptoms and get them to self-isolate as well. If medical conditions deteriorate, seek medical care.?

The Region of York is

taking a three-pronged approach to tackling the pandemic.

The first is case and

contact follow-up and case identification.

?This is the bread

and butter piece for public health and it is a time-tested strategy, what we call the containment strategy,? said Dr. Kurji. ?The second strategy is one of testing: the more people that we test, the more we are able to shift scarce resources onto those that need our attention in terms of putting rings around them and avoiding community exposures. The third strategy is the whole of society approach, which is the physical distancing, the closure of certain businesses, etc., and hopefully we don't come down to this one, but lockdowns. We need the public's assistance in continuing to break these chains of transmission. There is no reason why we cannot fight this virus and why we cannot win. The data seems to give us the impression that we are getting there, so please continue with these measures.?

AURORA CLOSES PUBLIC SPACES

On Friday, the Town

of Aurora announced the closure of all public open spaces in an effort to help flatten the curve.

The closure was

effective immediately and pertains to parks, tennis courts, skateboard parks, sports fields, baseball diamonds, basketball courts, playgrounds and the leash-free dog park on Industrial Parkway North.

?I would like to strongly

encourage residents to adhere to the closure of public open spaces in Aurora,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. ?We need to flatten the COVID-19 curve, and we can only do this with a global commitment from everyone to practice social distancing and refrain from social gatherings.?

Trails in Aurora are still open to the public although the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has closed Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area. If you decide to use the public trails system in Aurora, you are strongly encouraged to practice social distancing.

The Town encourages residents to report violations of the public open spaces closure instead of approaching the groups themselves? by sending an email with the day, time and location to bdepartment@aurora.ca, or leaving a voicemail at 905-727-3123 x4240.

All complaints will be investigated and fines of up to \$5,000 may be levied.