

Region sees 72% increase in first doses following vaccine certificate announcement

York Region Public Health spent Labour Day Monday at the Aurora Legion administering COVID-19 vaccines.

The pop-up clinic came just days after the Province of Ontario announced a vaccine certificate program, a move which prompted a spike in first dose administrations locally.

According to Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications for the Region of York, the local Public Health Unit saw a 72 per cent increase in the number of first doses administered to York Region residents on September 2, 2021, compared to the average number of first doses given between August 26 and September 2, 2021.

The number of appointments booked for September 3 was slightly higher (~14 per cent) than the average number of daily appointments booked from August 27 to September 1, he continued. This trend was driven by large increases in first dose appointments.

The Province's new proof-of-vaccine program was announced Wednesday, September 1.

Coming into effect on September 22, people will be required to provide proof of their vaccination status in certain businesses and settings.

Requiring proof of vaccines in these areas, says the Province, will reduce risk and is an important step to encourage every last eligible Ontarian to get their shot, which is critical to protecting the province's hospital capacity, while also supporting businesses with the tools they need to keep customers safe, stay open, and minimize disruptions.

As the world continues its fight against the Delta variant, our government will never waver in our commitment to do what's necessary to keep people safe, protect our hospitals and minimize disruptions to businesses, said Premier Doug Ford in a statement. Based on the latest evidence and best advice, COVID-19 vaccine certificates give us the best chance to slow the spread of the virus while helping us to avoid further lockdowns.

By the time the program is implemented on September 22, Ontarians will need to be fully vaccinated that is, having received two doses plus 14 days and provide proof of these vaccinations along with photo IDs at a number of public settings and facilities.

These include restaurants and bars (excluding outdoor patios, as well as delivery and takeout); nightclubs (including outdoor areas of the establishment); meeting and event spaces such as banquet halls and convention centres; facilities used for sports and fitness activities and personal fitness training, such as gyms, fitness and recreational facilities with the exception of youth recreational sport; sporting events; casinos, bingo halls and gaming establishments; concerts, music festivals, theatres and cinemas; strip clubs, bathhouses and sex clubs; and racing venues.

We know vaccines provide the best protection against COVID-19 and the Delta variant, said Minister of Health Christine Elliott. To protect the health and wellbeing of Ontarians, our government will offer one more tool to encourage even more Ontarians to receive the vaccine and provide further protection to fully vaccinated Ontarians as they safely enjoy activities with their loved ones and support their local businesses.

People who are unable to receive a vaccine for medical reasons will be permitted into these settings with a doctor's note until recognized medical exemptions can be integrated as part of a digital vaccine certificate, noted the Ministry.

Children 11 years of age and younger and unable to be vaccinated will also be exempt.

Ontario will develop and provide additional tools to improve user experience, efficiency and business supports in the coming weeks, including establishing alternative tools for people with no email, health card or ID, said the Province. The government will work to support implementation of vaccine certificates for Indigenous communities whether or not they have opted to enter their data into COVaxON, while maintaining Indigenous data governance, control, access and possession principles.

Ontarians currently have access to a paper or PDF vaccine receipt that includes all relevant information to prove that they are fully vaccinated. As of September 22, Ontarians will be required to show their vaccine receipt when entering designated settings along with another piece of photo identification, such as a driver's licence or health card. This is similar [to the initial] implementation approach announced in British Columbia.

Ontario will also introduce an enhanced digital vaccine receipt that features a QR code, which is safe, more secure and with you wherever you go. This digital vaccine receipt can be kept on a phone and easily used to show that you've been vaccinated if you need to. In addition, the province will launch a new app to make it easier and more convenient for businesses and organizations to read and verify that a digital vaccine receipt is valid, while protecting your privacy.

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