

Travel-related COVID-19 cases on the rise in York Region

Travel-related cases of COVID-19 are on the rise in York Region, while the numbers of new individuals seeking out COVID-19 testing is waning, according to Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

As the Province announced Monday that York Region would be entering Stage 3 of Ontario's plan to re-open the economy, Dr. Kurji urged residents to remain 'vigilant' against the virus as more businesses and public facilities open up to the public.

'As the Province moves to opening up places for Stage 3, please remember that this is a time when the higher risk places are going to be opening up, so it requires particularly diligent attention to all those hygiene measures, in particular physical distancing as well as washing our hands frequently,' he said. 'When wearing a mask indoors in public places, please remember that physical distancing is still paramount. The masks only give us an added layer of security for the community.'

'As we have seen when the southern states in the U.S. opened up, unfortunately there was a great resurgence in the cases. Our situation in York Region is different from that in the U.S. Nevertheless, we can't take things for granted, so we need to be particularly vigilant that the same thing doesn't happen here.'

While new case numbers in York Region continue to show signs of improvement, there are some trends Dr. Kurji said are worthy of some concern ' particularly travel-related cases, which he said are on an upswing.

'Most of these cases seem to be divided into 50 per cent coming from the States and 50 per cent internationally,' he said. 'As long as all these folks remain in quarantine and they get tested when they have mild symptoms, we can keep the lid over these cases and the transmission to the community, unlike the situation in early March.'

'Remind any travellers coming to your places, whether they be relatives or friends, to make sure that they quarantine themselves to keep our community safe. We are also seeing a reduction in the number of new individuals going for testing for COVID-19 as opposed to individuals going for repeat testing. Again, I would like to remind anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms, mild though they might be, to access the testing centres, which are the three assessment centres of the three local hospitals (including Southlake Regional Health Centre), and they are open six days a week.'

By Thursday night, the number of active cases of COVID-19 within Aurora remained in the double digits, with 11 total active cases. By July 22, Aurora has seen a total of 130 cases of the virus, 104 of which have now recovered. 15 cases have proved fatal.

9 of Aurora's 11 active cases are related to local transmission, with the balance attributed to institutional outbreaks outside the community.

Region-wide, York has seen a total of 3,243 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 2,739 cases marked resolved. 254 cases remain active, and 250 people have died.

By Brock Weir