

## Vaccinations for 80+ sees 20,000 appointments booked in two hours

York Region's vaccination rollout to all residents 80 years of age and older hit a snag within two hours of its launch on Monday morning with approximately 20,000 appointments snapped up within the first two hours.

By noon on Monday, Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications for the Region of York, said that the 20,000 appointments booked on March 1 accounts for the current supply of vaccines in the Region and, as more vaccines become available, they will resume booking appointments for this demographic.

Bookings re-opened Thursday morning at [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](http://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine).

This week, the Region and local hospitals began offering vaccines to those born in or before 1941 at several clinics across the community, including Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex, operated by Southlake Regional Health Centre; Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital, operated by Mackenzie Health; and at Markham's Cornell Community Centre.

As they prepared for Monday's rollout, two additional community clinics were opened the Richmond Green Sports Centre in Richmond Hill and, come Wednesday, March 3, at Georgina Ice Palace.

With support from our hospital partners and additional vaccine supply, we are very pleased to open more clinics ahead of schedule, said Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health. We understand there is a large volume of interest for vaccines and we thank everyone for their patience as we expand opportunities as vaccine becomes available.

Those who were unable to book one of the 20,000 slots on Monday will have to exercise some additional patience until further supply rolls in.

At this time, residents are urged to remain patient and will be notified as more appointment bookings become available, said Mr. Casey.

In his weekly update on COVID-19, Dr. Kurji hailed the Region's efforts in getting vaccine registration up and running before the Province's registration system is formally launched later this month.

We have certainly come a long way. After receiving permission from Retired General Hillier and the Province, York Region is moving forward with our COVID-19 mass immunization plan, he said. To be eligible, you must be 80 years of age or older, and be a resident of York Region. However, I must stress these vaccinations are by appointment only. Walk-in appointments are not available. Please do not attend a clinic without booking an appointment. Residents who are not able or comfortable booking an online appointment are encouraged to seek support from a family member, friend or caregiver who can assist with the booking.

We understand there is a lot of interest for vaccines in this priority group, but we ask for your patience. We expect our website will experience higher than normal volume and we apologize in advance for any delays you experience. If you do experience a delay, please do not call us or the hospitals as it will cause more delays. Please just wait and try again later. To ensure vaccines will be available for all those 80 years of age and older, please do not make more than one appointment or appointments at multiple clinics.

Immunization, he added, is the best way to protect ourselves from the virus.

We continue in Phase 1 of the Provincial vaccine distribution plan, he continued. To date, we have invited health care workers in the highest and very high priority groups and now residents 80+ for vaccination. Vaccine supplies are becoming steadier and with the recent approval of the AstraZeneca vaccine, we expect the supply to increase. York Region has been planning ahead to ensure we can get as many vaccines into many people's arms as quickly as possible when adequate vaccine supply is available. As vaccine supply increases, more clinics across York Region will open.

?We know residents are anxious and eager, but we ask for your patience as we immunize those who are most vulnerable and at highest risk of acquiring COVID-19.?

For more on how to register for your appointment, or how to help others who may not be able to access the portal themselves, visit [York.ca/Covid19Vaccine](#).

As of Tuesday, March 2, Aurora has seen a total of 951 cases of COVID-19, 32 of which remain active. There have been 879 recoveries and 40 deaths. Of the remaining active cases, 30 are attributed to local transmission and close contact, and 2 to workplace cluster. At press time, there were zero reported cases of COVID-19 in long-term care settings.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter