

## York Region averaging 90 new COVID cases per day

York Region is currently experiencing a record high of new COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, but these numbers could need to come down by more than half before communities like Aurora can come out of a modified Stage 2, according to Regional officials.

Last week, the Region of York sought additional guidance from the Province on new measures coming out of a modified Stage 2 of the Province's plan to re-open Ontario.

This guidance included further information on indoor spaces that need to close their doors until numbers improve, as well as what criteria need to be in place before an improvement is determined.

Between October 14 and October 20, York Region saw a seven-day average of 90 daily cases, seven new hospitalizations, and a positivity rate of 4.3 per cent.

Positivity rates in this case refer to the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests among all individuals being tested for COVID-19.

Per cent positivity helps to determine recent disease activity and trends as daily testing numbers fluctuate, said Patrick Casey, Director of Communications for the Region of York. Although a Provincial/Regional threshold for per cent positivity is still under review, a positivity rate of 3 per cent has been an internationally-recognized benchmark.

In terms of the incidence rate, the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health would like all Regions to be below 25 per 100,000 population and ideally at 10 per 100,000 population. York Region would need to average 40 daily cases to get a rate of around 25 cases per 100,000 population and an average 15 daily count to get to a rate of 10 cases per 100,000 population.

In his weekly update, Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, underscored both the rate of new cases of COVID-19 throughout the Region as well as urgency to be mindful of how we can work as individuals to help flatten the curve.

Our cases are at an all-time high, said Dr. Kurji. The numbers of outbreaks in institutions has been increasing. We have lots of outbreaks in our workplaces, and the numbers of schools under surveillance is around 50. The average number of cases a day is over 90 and our positivity rate is over 4 per cent. Since an individual who tests positive for COVID-19 is infectious for about two days prior to the onset of symptoms, it is important for us to consider anyone outside of our own households to be potentially infectious. This means then we ought to be limiting severely the numbers of contacts we have outside our own households. Do not socialize with people outside your own household. We understand there may be some exceptional situations, but remember every such situation results in the potential of infection-spreading.

Recent Thanksgiving observances are likely a contributing factor to a spike in new infections, he added.

Remember, even if you have mild symptoms do not mingle with other individuals. The most important thing that you can do is to maintain a distance of 2 metres or more from other individuals outside your household. When you're asked to self-isolate, you have to use your own room, your own washroom, keep your distance from other members of the family, and keep sanitizing the different areas that are commonly touched. It is important that we restrict the transmission to the rest of the family.

### LOCAL NUMBERS

On Friday, October 23, York Region Public Health determined a recent outbreak at Chartwell Aurora, formerly Resthaven, was now resolved. First declared October 5, the outbreak lasted for 18 days and involved a single case amongst the long-term care residence's healthcare worker population. A further outbreak, this time at Magic Tree Child Care Centre, was deemed closed Tuesday afternoon.

Two Aurora schools are presently under surveillance for COVID-19, including St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School and Wellington Public School. Schools under surveillance are those with a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19 among staff, students or visitors where there is currently no evidence of transmission within the school.

By October 27, Aurora had seen a total of 247 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, with 20 of these cases remaining active. 212 cases are now deemed as recovered. There have been 15 deaths in Aurora attributed to the virus.

Of the 20 active cases, 18 are attributed to local transmission/close contact, with the balance sourced to workplace outbreaks.

2 Aurora residents are hospitalized with the virus in a non-ICU setting at press time.

York Region has seen a total of 6,452 cases of COVID-19 since March, with 848 cases remaining active. There have been 268 confirmed deaths and 5,336 recoveries.

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter