

York Region residents will have to wait to join Stage 3 reopening

York Region residents will have to wait a little longer to find out when communities, including Aurora, can enter Stage 3 of the Province's plan to re-open the economy.

On Monday, Premier Doug Ford announced 24 of the Province's Regions were ready to go to the next phase, but York Region ? along with Toronto, Peel, Durham, Niagara, Windsor-Essex, Haldiman-Norfolk, Hamilton and Lambton ? missed the cut.

Clarity, however, could come as early as next week.

?As we all know, these Regions entered Stage 2 later on so we need just a little more time,? said Premier Ford. ?I want the people in these Regions to know we won't leave anyone behind, and we will provide an update every Monday on Regional re-openings. We will keep working together until every part of this Province gets to Stage 3.

?We are moving forward as a Province, but we can't stop; we won't stop until we get every person in Ontario, every worker in Ontario, back to work and back on their feet. Today's news is an important step forward. It is an important step in getting life back to normal.?

?Normal? in this context means new limits on public gatherings, including allowing up to 100 people to gather indoors and up to 50 people indoors.

Stage 3 also means ?nearly all businesses and public places will be allowed to open their doors safely,? including dine-in restaurants, bars, gyms and fitness centres, most personal care services, live shows, performing arts spaces, movie theatres, casinos, recreational facilities, team sports and live sporting events and guide services.

?Today, we are taking another important step forward in our journey to re-open our Province,? said Health Minister ? and Newmarket-Aurora MPP ? Christine Elliott on Monday. ?We are only able to move the Province into Stage 3 because of considerable and ongoing efforts of all Ontarians to stop the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing, wearing face coverings, practicing good hand hygiene and keeping our social circles safe have been critical in helping to achieve this milestone today and will remain critical.

?We are asking everyone to continue these everyday actions to help keep our friends, neighbours and family members safe so that we can continue to safely enjoy the loosening of restrictions. As we have done with Stage 2, we will continue the ongoing assessment of all regions and will advise whether a specific region is ready to move into Stage 3 every week. As we do, we will be able to safely move every Region of our Province into Stage 3, so long as we continue to see public health trends move in the right direction as they have been. Once we take this

important step forward, we expect the Province will stay in Stage 3 for the foreseeable future.?

WHERE THINGS STAND IN AURORA

As most of Ontario, excluding the GTA, moves into Stage 3 and York Region prepares for the mandatory use of masks and face coverings in all indoor public places as of 12.01 a.m. this Friday, July 17, Aurora has seen a continued uptick in active cases of COVID-19.

Two weeks ago, the local number of active cases was in the single digits. At press time Tuesday, Aurora was grappling with 16 active cases.

To date, Aurora has experienced 127 confirmed cases of the virus, with 96 cases now marked resolved. 15 cases have proved fatal.

15 of the 16 active cases are attributed to local transmission or close contact of a case, with the 1 remaining case related to an institutional outbreak outside Aurora.

As of July 14, York Region has seen a total of 3,172 cases, 2,620 of which have been marked recovered. 303 active cases remain and 249 cases have resulted in death.

By Brock Weir