

Province gives out COVID-19 safety tips for a closer-to-normal Halloween this year

By Rob Paul

With Thanksgiving in the rearview mirror and Halloween on the horizon, Ontario health officials are giving the go-ahead for a closer-to-normal night of trick-or-treating.

To ensure trick-or-treating is at its safest, people are being asked to spend as much time outdoors during the process as possible and to incorporate masks or face coverings into their costumes?though a costume mask shouldn't be worn in place of a non-medical mask or face covering.

?For the slightly older trick-or-treaters who might be considering attending or throwing a Halloween party, all the guidance that I had previously outlined for Thanksgiving, and other social gatherings applies to you too,? Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Moore said. ?It bears repeating, if you are sick, even with mild symptoms, you should not be participating in social events like Halloween. We know from experience it is exactly these kinds of events that can lead to spikes in transmission. But provided we do our best to follow the guidelines in place, we can enjoy some well-deserved time with friends and family, while also keeping our community transmission low.?

The Province provided tips around COVID-19 safety for this Halloween: stay home if you have symptoms; trick-or-treat outdoors as much as possible; be creative and ensure face coverings are part of your costume; do not crowd doorsteps?take turns at the door; do not sing or shout for treats; keep interactions brief; and use hand sanitizer often.

Moore made it a point to emphasize the need for trick-or-treaters to not shout when trick-or-treating to stop the spread of droplets.

?Clearly you have to make your presence known to get your treat, and you have to be able to knock as well as ask for the treat,? he said. ?We just ask not with a high volume that could potentially aerosolize. It's an abundance of caution.?

There are also COVID-19 safety tips for those who choose to give out treats: do not participate if you have symptoms; keep interactions with trick-or-treaters short; consider wearing a face covering; give out only purchased and packaged treats; do not ask trick-or-treaters to sing or shout; and clean or sanitize hands throughout the evening.

Coming out of the Thanksgiving long weekend, the Region of Peel did see a dip in the weekly total of new COVID-19 cases with 369 to bring the grand total to 117,195?there was one additional death bringing the total to 1,020.

The Town of Caledon also saw a decrease in weekly COVID cases with just 10 new cases this past week to bring its total to 4,859. There were no new additional deaths related to COVID keeping the total at 22.

Vaccine coverage and Peel continues to increase slowly as 2,455,274 total doses have been administered and 19,702 in the last seven-day cycle (October 1 to 7). 1,299,946 individuals have received at least one dose with 1,150,978 fully vaccinated.

The Region has also begun tracking individuals who have received a third dose and 4,350 residents have received a third dose. In September the Province, encouraged residents who are eligible to receive a third dose of the vaccine for increased protection against the Delta variant.

Peel now has 70.8 per cent of all residents fully vaccinated and 76 per cent with at least one dose. With a vaccine not yet approved for residents below the age of 12, the numbers spike positively to 81.2 per cent of fully vaccinated residents 12 and older in the Region?87.2 per cent have at least one dose?and 81.6 per cent of adult (18+) residents being fully vaccinated and 87.4 per cent having at least one dose.

With proof of vaccination being required to enter certain indoors settings?including restaurants and bars; sports and fitness facilities; and concerts and sporting events?as of September 22, the Provincial government announced last month that a standardized QR code system would be implemented by October 22 to streamline the process.

There have been no updates since the announcement, but a copy of your proof of vaccination is attainable through the government website.

To download or print a copy of your proof of vaccination, visit covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-booking-support#proof-of-vaccination. To book a vaccine in the Region of Peel, visit www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment/.