

Caledon to remain grouped in with Brampton, Mississauga as restrictions continue

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Mayor Allan Thompson was joined by MPP and Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, as well as Peel Medical Officer of Health Dr. Lawrence Loh at a local town hall last week to answer some questions provided by members of the community.

With Caledon being directed into the Red level, many residents had concerns regarding businesses, vaccines, isolation centres with further explanations to his additional restrictions he provided on Nov 7.

One issue Caledon residents have been having in the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic, is being looped in with the rest of Peel including Mississauga and Brampton, who have been showing high confirmed cases then in Caledon.

One local resident asked why Caledon is being grouped together with Mississauga and Brampton when showing low numbers.

"I recognize that it may seem unfair that Caledon is being brought together with the rest of Peel, but the reality is that we are seeing the same level of activity in Caledon," said Dr. Loh. "Caledon actually posted its highest number of daily cases since the pandemic started (last week), which is 14. Which doesn't sound like a lot, but when it's in a town of 70,000, 80,000 people, that actually is really significant by comparison."

He added, "The reality is that COVID-19 is circulating in our community."

"As we learn more about where the outbreaks are, as we see the percentages, we've had a lot of conversations with the mayor and councillors about "is this the time to have Caledon out?" said MPP Jones. "I think it's pretty clear when you look at the percentages, that it's not."

Dr. Loh informed that in October, there have been 50 potential exposures in different places of worship, which concluded his decision to limit capacity in religious centres or locations.

"Where you're bringing together large numbers of people that may lead to people drawing closer, ignoring precautions and spread," he said. "The evidence is there."

A future vaccine is still unclear as testing is continuing to be done. Dr. Loh was unable to provide a hard date as it will take time to get production going once one is available, as well as prioritizing distribution.

The vulnerable residents are likely to receive the vaccine before others, which includes those over 70 years of age, individuals with multiple medical conditions or chronic medical conditions, those living in congregate living settings and high-risk workers including those on the frontlines.

Residents have been curious about the benefits of multi-layer masking, in which Dr. Loh remarks that a three-layer mask is ideal. The multiple layers are ideal for a source of control in preventing spread of your germs and offering protection for yourself as well.

Dr. Loh also informed council as well as the public listening in that an isolation center is in the talks for Peel region.

"The federal government approved our application for funding for an isolation center. We are now moving the conversation and dialogue to how we can actually increase the current isolation centre that we have, which really supports individuals who are experiencing homelessness, but really trying to augment and ramp up that center, so that individuals who have COVID-19 or who

have been exposed in close contact with someone with COVID-19 can possibly access such a center if they are unable to self-isolate," he explained.

Schools are said to be the last thing to be closed down as they have seen the impacts school closures has on students and is hoping to do everything to avoid the possibility.

"I think for every public health physician in the province, local, provincial and federal schools are going to be the last thing that go," said Loh. "We learned from the first wave and we've learned from the country's experiences that there are significant challenges to leaving children out of school. For their mental health and wellbeing, their education, for their socialization and development."

Dr. Loh will continue to provide Caledon with further updates as time goes on to keep the community informed on the latest updates.

"This is far from over in the Region of Peel at this point in time," said Loh. "Our choices matter more than ever in terms of trying to bring this under control."

For further info, visit peelregion.ca.