

First COVID-19 Omicron variant case detected in Peel Region

By Rob Paul

As the Omicron variant of COVID-19 continues to impact countries across the world since it was detected in South Africa a few weeks ago, the first Omicron variant case has now been found in the Region of Peel.

The individual had close contact with a travel-related case identified in Halton Region. The individual is currently isolating at home. Peel Public Health has investigated this case and risk of further spread is low.

With variants like Omicron emerging around the world, residents must continue to mask, socially distance, and get tested and isolate when sick, said Dr. Lawrence Loh, Peel's Medical Officer of Health. More importantly, I encourage you to get two doses of the vaccine as soon as possible. Those eligible for a third or booster dose are encouraged to get their additional dose as well.

With the threat of the Omicron variant increasing, the Government of Ontario is extending its pause on the lifting of capacity limits in remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required while the province continues to monitor trends in public health and health care indicators and learns more about the Omicron variant.

While an increase in the number of cases was always expected as we entered the winter months, with the emergence of the Omicron variant we must continue following the measures we have in place that have been working for us, said Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health. Over the coming weeks and months, we need to stay the course on reaching those who have not yet been vaccinated. If you have not yet received the vaccine, please do so today and if you are eligible for a booster dose, please book your appointment to provide yourself with an extra layer of protection. Achieving the highest vaccination rates possible remains our best defence against COVID-19 and variants.

To increase protection against the Omicron variant, the Ontario government is also accelerating COVID-19 vaccine booster dose eligibility to Ontarians aged 50 and over and additional high-risk individuals, providing an extra layer of protection against COVID-19 and its variants.

Starting Monday, December 13 at 8 a.m., individuals 50 and older will be eligible to schedule their booster dose appointment. Beginning in January, Ontario will further expand eligibility for booster doses based on age and risk, with an interval of six to eight months from the second dose.

If you are eligible for a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, please book your appointment as soon as you can to provide yourself with an extra layer of protection, said Dr. Moore.

If you have not yet received the vaccine, please do so today. This includes vaccinations for children aged five to 11. Achieving the highest vaccination rates possible remains our best tool to protect us, reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, and fight the significant surge of new cases and the new Omicron variant.

As for vaccination efforts in Peel, 75.3 per cent of all residents have two doses of the vaccine and 79.4 per cent have at least one. 86.6 per cent of adults (18+) in the Region have both doses while 90 per cent have at least one. 89.9 per cent of those 12 and older have at least one dose and 89.9 per cent have both.

In total, the Region has administered 2,618,715 doses of the vaccine. 1,342,927 have at least one dose, 1,219,377 have two doses, and 56,411 have received a third dose.

Since last week, Peel has seen 525 new COVID-19 cases, over 200 more than the previous week, bringing the total to 119,843. There were also two more deaths in the Region to bring the total to 1,033.

In Caledon, there were 28 new cases to bring the Town's total to 5,007. The death count remains at 22.

To book a vaccine in the Region of Peel, visit www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment/. To schedule a third dose booster, visit <https://covid19.ontariohealth.ca/>.

To download or print a copy of your proof of vaccination, visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-booking-support#proof-of-vaccination>.

To learn more about the official QR code system Ontario has implemented and to access yours, visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/get-proof>.