

Ontario implements additional COVID precautions in long-term care

By Rob Paul

As the Omicron variant continues to spread in Ontario, the provincial government is taking further action to protect long-term care and retirement homes.

The temporary measures will help to reduce the risk of transmission during the winter months and protect the progress the Province has made in stopping the spread of the virus and its variants throughout these settings.

Effective immediately, all general visitors to a long-term care home will need to be fully vaccinated to enter. In addition, the Ministry of Long-Term Care will be directing all long-term care homes to increase infection prevention and control (IPAC) audits

“Our priority is to protect long-term care residents from COVID-19. Faced with rising rates of community infection and the emerging threat of the Omicron variant, we are immediately implementing further measures to protect our most vulnerable based on the best available scientific and medical advice,” said Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care. “These further measures build on the ones already taken, including mandatory vaccinations, priority for third doses and randomized testing and will provide the best level of protection possible.”

After moving his weekly COVID briefing up from Thursday to Tuesday, Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, spoke about the decision.

“As we continue to learn more about the Omicron variant and see its impacts on other jurisdictions around the world, it is critical we provide those at greatest risk from COVID-19 in our congregate care settings with an extra layer of protection against this new enemy,” said Moore. “By strengthening public health measures in these settings, we can ensure our most vulnerable are kept safe and shielded from the threats posed by Omicron and other variants of concern.”

With Ontario consistently seeing over 1,000 new cases per day and the test positivity steadily increasing, Moore was asked about the potential of school closures and moving students back to online learning as well as what to do throughout the holiday season.

“It’s my hope to keep schools open as long as we can,” he said. “I think Ontarians have been prudent and reasonable and you should be doing a risk assessment based on your own personal health, your risk of having an adverse event or outcome associated with Omicron, and the vaccination level of the community around you.”

“You can assume Omicron is becoming the dominant strain in the coming days or weeks, and take appropriate action based on your personal circumstances, family circumstance, and your community. I do trust Ontarians to make the right decisions and limit their number of contacts as the risk goes up. We will have further advice coming this week on potential maximum numbers for gatherings, but as you know, the smaller, the better.”

With the increase in third dose boosters, Peel has now administered 2,660,941 doses of the vaccine. 1,352,011 individuals have received one dose, 1,222,835 have received both doses, and 86,095 have received their third dose booster.

In terms of vaccine coverage, the whole Region now has 76.8 per cent two-dose coverage and 81.3 per cent single dose coverage. For adults (18+), 81 per cent have both doses and 85.8 per cent have at least one—the number improve when looking at those 12 and older with 88.1 per cent double vaccinated and 91.6 per cent with one dose.

This week in Peel, there were 593 new cases of COVID-19 to bring the total to 120,436. There were no new deaths with the total remaining at 1,033.

In Caledon, there were 53 new cases this week?nearly double the number of new cases in the previous week?to bring the total to 5,060. There were no new deaths in the Town as the number remained 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 covid19.ontariohealth.ca.

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