

Ontario set to end mask mandate on Monday

By Rob Paul

As of Monday, March 21, the Government of Ontario will no longer require masks in specific indoor settings.

Businesses, like with vaccine passports, may still require it independent of the province's decision.

Premier Doug Ford recently addressed some of the concerns over removing mask mandates despite some health organizations and experts objecting to the decision without further data to support the move.

'I've always listened to the recommendations of (Ontario Chief Medical Officer) Dr. (Kieran) Moore,' said Ford. 'Dr. Moore has put our recommendations forward, and I believe in him. He's done an incredible job and has brought us this far through the pandemic. We're going to continue to be cautious and always be cautious, and when it comes to masks, if someone wants to wear a mask then all the power to them. It's going to be their option and however they feel about it, it's going to be their decision.'

'I've always followed Dr. Moore's direction, and it's going to be a choice for people. If I'm going into long-term care to see my mother-in-law, I'm wearing a mask or if I'm visiting someone in the hospital, I'm going to wear a mask. People are going to have a choice and Dr. Moore said we're at the point where people are going to have to determine if they want to wear a mask or not. I encourage everyone moving forward to support each other, no matter if you're wearing a mask or you aren't. Let's be united and respect each and every person's decision.'

When asked about the protection of children under five who aren't eligible for vaccination and also aren't required to mask being at risk with those around them no longer needing to mask, Ford was adamant it's about choice.

'If they're uncomfortable, wear a mask,' he said. 'It's not being forced on anyone, it's their choice. If they're nervous, then keep their masks on. It's up to the parents (to mask their children), nobody is going to force anyone to take a mask off or put a mask on. The parents understand the situations within their family and with their child and it's going to be their choice.'

Ford ended his announcement by clarifying that every person running for the PC Party of Ontario is vaccinated.

With Monday marking the end of mask mandates in Ontario, vaccine coverage and third booster shots continue to increase in the Region.

Peel has now administered 3,282,456 doses of the vaccine?1,403,611 individuals have one dose, 1,276,714 have both doses, and 597,191 have received their third dose booster.

The Region now has 82 per cent of all residents with two dose coverage and single dose coverage remaining at 86.1. 91.7 per cent of those 12 and older are double vaccinated and 94.4 per cent have initiated the vaccination process?86.5 per cent of all eligible residents (5+) have both doses and 90.9 per cent have one.

In Peel, the COVID-19 case total has dropped below 1,000 once again after last week's spike to over 2,000 new cases. The Region has seen 824 new cases since last week with the total rising to 177,353 and the death count rising to 1,284 with 33 new deaths since last week.

Caledon's seen 37 new cases over the last week to bring the Town total to 7,708. There was one new death this week with the count rising to 28.

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 (which some businesses continue to require), visit covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-booking-support#proof-of-vaccination.