

Ontario set to lift mask mandates in most settings March 21

By Rob Paul

The Government of Ontario plans to remove most mask mandates across the province on March 21. This includes in schools, restaurants, stores, and other indoor settings.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore announced the mask mandate changes Wednesday.

“With continued improvements in trends, Ontario will remove the mandatory masking requirement for most settings on March 21 with the exception of select settings such as public transit, healthcare settings, long-term care homes, and high-risk congregate care settings,” he said. “Removing the mask mandate does not mean the risk is gone; COVID-19 transmission is still occurring across the province and masks can help protect you and others from becoming infected with COVID-19.

“We can expect indicators such as cases and hospitalizations to increase slightly as Ontario increasingly interacts with one another. However, thanks to our high vaccination rates and natural immunity that's developing, as well as the arrival of other therapeutics and anti-virals, Ontario has the tools necessary to manage the impact of this virus.”

By April 27, all restrictions are expected to be lifted in Ontario, including mask mandates in all settings.

“We are now learning to live with and manage COVID-19 for the long term,” Moore said. “This necessitates a shift to a more balanced response to the pandemic.

Despite the lifting on mask mandates, Moore recommends more vulnerable Ontarians continue to wear masks and left the door open for the return of mask mandates.

“We should all be prepared that we may need to resume mask wearing,” said Moore.

“If you want to keep your mask on, keep it on. If you want to take it off, take it off,” said Premier Doug Ford.

As Ontario removes all COVID-19 restrictions in the coming weeks, vaccine coverage and third booster shots continue to increase in the Region.

Peel has now administered 3,275,236 doses of the vaccine?1,403,017 individuals have one dose, 1,274,162 have both doses, and 593,303 have received their third dose booster.

The Region now has 81.8 per cent of all residents with two dose coverage and 86.1 per cent with single dose. 91.7 per cent of those 12 and older are double vaccinated and 94.4 per cent have initiated the vaccination process. 86.3 per cent of all eligible residents (5+) have both doses and 90.8 per cent have one.

In Peel, the COVID-19 case total has spiked once again after not topping 1,000 new cases for two weeks. The Region has seen 2,367 new cases since last week with the total rising to 176,529 and the death count rising to 1,251 with 40 new deaths since last week.

Caledon has seen 97 new cases over the last week to bring the Town total to 7,671. There were no new deaths this week with the count staying at 27.

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.