

## Peel Medical Officer of Health provides Caledon with COVID-19 update

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Caledon Council members were joined by Peel Medical Officer of Health Dr. Lawrence Loh on January 19, who provided a much-needed update amid recent COVID-19 updates.

Dr. Loh shared wide-ranging information for Council, as well as those listening in on the meeting, from masks, to the COVID-19 vaccine, to the stay-at-home order.

One issue Dr. Loh shared with Council is the ongoing concerning situation regarding the hospitals within Peel Region, which are continuing to adapt and make necessary changes, according to public health guidelines.

"I understand from our hospital partners, they continue to be putting COVID-19 surge plans into effect, cancelling numerous elective surgeries, transferring patients sometimes hours away from the hospitals that they're admitted in order to receive needed care," he explained.

Peel is looking at the deployment of field hospitals in at least one of the Region's health care centres.

"It's more than just the cases at this point in time. We are now seeing the impacts on our health care system," Dr. Loh continued.

Residents, like everyone else across the Province, are highly encouraged to follow the necessary precautions and guidelines provided by the Ontario government and public health agencies. They are meant not only for the safety of residents and communities, but also for our healthcare providers and hospitals.

It's an effort to keep transmissions low so hospitals don't get overwhelmed with additional patients they may not have the capacity for.

"Sticking to the Provincial, stay-at-home order as part of the provincewide lockdown is really highly encouraged at this point," said Dr. Loh.

Peel hospitals include William Osler Health System, Brampton Civic Hospital as well as Trillium Health Partners' three main locations: Credit Valley Hospital, Mississauga Hospital and Queensway Health Centre.

Additionally, the mental health sector has also been significantly impacted as individuals continue to cope with disconnect and isolation from others.

A poll done by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health concluded that 50 per cent of Canadians found their mental health worsening since the beginning of the pandemic. One in 10 Canadians reported that it was due to the pandemic that their mental health significantly dropped.

"It is really important for me to implore residents, implore everyone to please make sure even while you have to be physically apart, to remain connected to those that you love, to remain connected with your family, your friends and certainly to seek help if you need it," said Dr. Loh.

As the Federal government recently announcing the delay in distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, some Council members shared their concerns on the impacts this will have on Peel Region and residents.

Dr. Loh shared with Council that Peel Public Health had been advised that the delivery schedule of the COVID-19 vaccine was to be reduced over the next month. The reduction is 20 per cent this week, 80 per cent allocations next week and 50 per cent the remaining two weeks after.

?We've since been advised that apparently there is no Pfizer that is anticipated to come on the first week of February, so not an 80 per cent reduction, 100 per cent,? said Dr. Loh. ?That may change as the situation continues to evolve.?

As many residents continue to enjoy winter activities including ice skating, Council is encouraging the community to follow the provided guidelines, keeping apart from one another and wearing a mask to ensure their safety.

Caledon had seven outdoor community rinks where restricted gathering limits have been implemented by Peel Public Health, which includes a limit of five people per rink.

?I think it's important, especially even on the Trailways, everybody's got to keep six feet apart and please wear a mask,? remarked Mayor Allan Thompson. ?It's good at this time of year, especially when it's getting cold. It's just another thing to protect the nose and mouth.?

Dr. Loh will be joining Caledon Council for his next COVID-19 update on February 3 for the Mayor's Virtual Town Hall.