

Peel surpasses 1 million vaccine doses administered as positivity rate continues to decrease in Caledon

By Rob Paul

On May 25, the Region of Peel achieved the milestone of administering 1 million doses of vaccine on the heels of the province-wide stay-at-home order ending on June 2.

These efforts have resulted in the continued vaccination of eligible priority groups, including youth who are 12 years of age or older who live, work, or attend school in Peel.

Peel continues to work towards achieving a 75 per cent goal of first dose vaccinations within the community. Continued initiatives, such as mobile clinics, targeted pop-ups, and centralized vaccination centres will move Peel closer to the goals of reaching the most vulnerable who have not received their first dose and preparing for second doses.

"There has never been a greater time to recognize the dedication of our community," said Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health. "Thank you to every individual who has been vaccinated or helped a family member, a colleague or friend to connect to vaccination. I'm so proud of the commitment in support of our community. At the same time, I am thankful to the teams and community members who continue to commit themselves to this tireless effort. This milestone is also a reminder that we must continue to do our part by remaining vigilant and working together to keep each other healthy and safe.

As part of that, I encourage anyone who is eligible to get vaccinated so we can come out on the other side of this pandemic."

The Region has now surpassed 1 million doses with 1,127,026 being administered?134,191 between May 24 and May 31?with 46,638 individuals who have completed their vaccinations.

59.9 per cent of all residents in the Region have received at least one dose with 71.1 per cent of the population over 18 having received one dose?3.1 per cent of the total population have completed vaccination.

Dr. Loh said it's encouraging to see the increasing vaccination rates in the community but reiterates that residents must understand the importance of the second dose with the first protecting against severity and mortality and the second to lessen the risk of passing the disease onto others.

"We surpassed 1 million doses; it's amazing to think that at the beginning of this year we hadn't delivered more than a handful of doses to our long-term care and highest risk healthcare workers in hospitals," said Dr. Loh. "From there, we've now built this program that has been made possible through our continued partnership with the Ministry of Health and thanks to everyone in the community. Ultimately this is our collective effort, so thank you to everyone who has gotten their first dose. As more people get their first dose in the community, we will move onto second doses."

As of June 1, there have been 109,443 cases of COVID-19 in Peel Region with 765 deaths?an increase of 1,424 cases and nine more deaths since last week. In total, 4,384 cases have been from Caledon with 18 deaths?63 more cases, but zero deaths since last week.

On Friday, May 28, Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson held a virtual town hall session with Dr. Loh and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones to address where things are at in the Region and Town with the pandemic.

"This has been a long journey, we've been at this now for about 15 months," said Mayor Thompson. "As long as we can get our community vaccinated, we can start to open it up. Our small businesses have been through a real tough one here and I really believe they can only open once and we want to make sure we get it right. I sure hope the province doesn't go with a regional approach so we can all open together and have fairness for our small businesses. I encourage everybody to get out and support them as soon as

we can open up in a safe manner, but to do that we've got to get needles in the arms and get the vaccinations done. I encourage everybody to please get their vaccinations.?

With over 8 million people over the age of 18 in the province now vaccinated, Jones was ecstatic with the vaccination efforts in Ontario and in Peel.

?It's wonderful that Peel has attained the 70 per cent number,? said Jones. ?I'm going to say that there are public health units across Ontario that are still in the low 50s and the reason that disparity is happening is because we made a very conscious decision based on advice from health experts that if we put the vaccines into the communities and areas that were experiencing the highest rates of positivities, that we would do more to limit the transmission. Kudos to the Region of Peel for achieving that 70 per cent, but it's important to understand that parts of Ontario are still in the low 50s and that the equalization still has to occur. The vast majority of the vaccine supply went to Toronto, Peel, and to a lesser extent York?that was done strategically, and it has worked.?

Dr. Loh was pleased to announce in the last week that Caledon's test positivity rate sits at 7.9 per cent and the COVID-19 incidence rate is at 118.5 per 100,000?both numbers being down from the previous week?and the reproductive number in Caledon is at 0.83, which he says mirrors what the entire Region is seeing.

?It's been a long and unprecedented human health emergency in our community, but we are starting to finally see some glimmers of light thanks to the provincial increased allocation to hotspots,? said Dr. Loh. ?The 70 to 75 per cent mark has been where international comparisons have started to see changes in patterns of severity and mortality. I think this really gives Caledon and the Region of Peel a significant level of protection that will stand us in good stead, especially as our third wave continues to resolve. The third wave does continue to resolve here due to the very strong disease control measures that have been put into place. There's been a significant decline in cases and test positivity. What happens with this human health disaster is it's a cascade, cases in larger numbers a certain portion of those individuals may require hospitalization and a certain portion of those individuals may require ICU stays. The less cases we have, the less proportions we have in hospitalizations and mortalities.?

As the case numbers in Caledon and the Region decrease, the pressure that has been put on the healthcare system has been lessened.

?Our hospitals are starting to see their situations stabilize,? he said. ?While they are still seeing admissions steadily, we are seeing the total admissions and ICU stays starting to decrease reflecting the lagging nature of hospitalizations as an indicator for our pandemic progress.?

Dr. Loh said their provincial partners are looking closely at how and where they will start rolling out second doses and he looks forward to being able to share more on the second dose strategy in Peel when the information comes available.

To book a vaccination in the Region of Peel visit peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment.