

Stay-at-home orders in effect for four weeks

By Brock Weir

A third wave has brought a third stay-at-home order from the Province.

Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott announced the four-week stay-at-home order, effective just after midnight on April 8, on Wednesday afternoon.

Under the new restrictions, which go hand-in-hand with the measures announced last week as part of the Province-wide 'emergency brake,' all businesses must ensure that any employee who can work from home does so rather than coming into the workplace and individuals are urged to restrict travel outside their home region and only leave their homes for essential purposes such as going to get groceries or pharmacy items, and to attend medical appointments.

Additionally, new rules address retail with grocery stores and pharmacies allowed to continue in-person shopping with restrictions and capacity limits, while big box retailers will be restricted to selling essential items such as groceries, pharmaceutical items, healthcare and personal care items, and pet care supplies.

Further restrictions are applied to non-essential retail limited to delivery and curbside, while malls will be restricted as well.

'As we ramp up our vaccine distribution, we also need to make sure we take the steps necessary to slow the spread of the virus and protect our ICU and hospital capacity,' said Premier Ford, noting that mobile vaccinations will soon come online for eligible residents 18+ in high-risk neighbourhoods while all education workers in the high-risk areas of Toronto and Peel will be brought forward in the vaccine rollout.

'The reality is despite everything we have done so far, the COVID-19 situation in Ontario is getting worse as these new variants continue to spread,' the Premier continued. 'Our hospitals are reaching capacity and patients in the GTA must now be sent to other parts of the Province for care. Right now, above all else, our plan is to get needles into arms and protect our hospitals. That is why' on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, I am declaring a state of emergency with a Province-wide stay-at-home order.

'To boil it down as simple as possible, unless it is for an essential reason, please stay home because the situation is extremely serious and we just need to hunker down right now. We need to limit mobility. Non-essential retail stores will go back to curbside pickup with delivery allowed from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Big box and discount stores will be allowed to sell essential items only such as food, medicine, cleaning supplies, and personal care items. During the stay-at-home orders, residential evictions will once again be suspended because no one should live in fear of losing their homes.

'I know this is tough on business, but I promise we will continue to have your backs.'

Added Solicitor General ' and Dufferin-Caledon MPP ' Sylvia Jones: 'I cannot stress enough how important the actions of each individual in Ontario will be today, tomorrow and in the coming weeks as we confront this threat to the health and wellbeing of our communities. It is critical now more than ever that people adhere to the orders and follow public health measures. These measures will be enforced.

'We know it hasn't been easy and nothing about this pandemic has been. We need to do more to make a difference and to help keep people safe extraordinary action is needed from every single one of us. This is about saving lives. Stopping the spread of COVID-19 can only be done by taking the necessary precautions and following measures that will protect our families, neighbours and our communities.'

Meanwhile, in Peel, vaccination efforts will soon take a significant step forward.

The Region announced Tuesday that residents aged 50+ living in select postal codes will soon be able to book their COVID-19 vaccine. Further information will be made available in the coming days at peelregion.ca.