

Stricter restrictions implemented across Peel Region as COVID-19 numbers rise

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Earlier in November the provincial government released new framework to help battle the COVID-19 pandemic that has been ongoing since early this year.

This framework introduced five new levels that will provide preventive measures to help businesses stay open, and to identify which regions require the implementation of urgent safety-targeted measures.

Green stands for prevent, Yellow for protect, Orange for restrict, Red for control and the last resort, Lockdown.

Peel Region has been highlighted in the Red zone as of Saturday, Nov 7. Measures in the Red level are to control transmission by staying or moving to the modified Stage 2.

"The framework lays out a proactive and graduated response, based on the local situation in each region," said Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer. "By working with the local authorities on the realities and situations of COVID-19, we want to continue to help protect people's health and wellbeing. We are adapting the public health measures to be as targeted and efficient as possible to stop the spread of the virus, while managing any outbreaks as quickly as possible."

In addition to being sectioned into the Red level, Medical Officer of Health in the Region of Peel Dr. Lawrence Loh has introduced additional safety measures for Peel residents, introducing stricter restrictions.

Due to the rapidly rising numbers of confirmed cases in the region, Dr. Loh sent a informative letter out to the community stating if stricter measures are not set, the COVID-19 transmission will continue to grow and significantly worsen.

"We are at a point of significant crisis that threatens lives, livelihoods, and our healthcare system," he stated in his letter. "Concerningly, in the past week area hospitals have begun to reach capacity as a direct consequence of a surge in COVID-19 admissions. This means any further growth of the COVID-19 pandemic in our community will overwhelm our efforts to keep our community safe, ensure access to hospital and healthcare services, and prevent mortality."

His restrictions include adaptations for businesses, individuals, events until further notice.

Weddings and all gatherings in establishments are to be cancelled started Nov 13 until January 7 which the possibility of extensions. All larger gatherings including holidays, birthdays or any other life events are to be ceased effective Nov 13.

Non-essential individuals are prohibited to entering workplaces, and employees are encouraged to work remotely if possible.

Gyms and other fitness centres are discouraged by Dr. Loh, but if necessary, classes must require pre-registration and provide contact information. No walk-ins should be allowed.

Religious services, rites or ceremonies are encouraged to be virtual, but if not possible, indoor capacity has been reduced 30 per cent to a maximum of 50 people per facility.

Peel residents are prohibited to visiting other households other than their own aside from emergency or medical reasons, renovations or construction, deliveries or tutoring.

Meetings and event banquets are to close.

It is time to shrink our lives to stop COVID-19 from growing completely out of control. These directives are strict, but they are what is needed to keep people in Peel working and learning, and able to access food, medical care and the basics of everyday life. Together, the actions and sacrifices of Peel residents and businesses will stop the spread of COVID-19, help avoid a lockdown and ultimately save lives. We must take aggressive action now to get the pandemic under control in Peel," said Dr. Loh.

Mayor Allan Thompson spoke out through his online blog that he agrees with the measures put in place to keep everyone safe.

"I supported it because lives are at stake," he stated. "No amount of negative, hateful and offensive social media or phone messages will change that; sometimes the right thing to do isn't the easiest or the most popular."

Ontario has reported 1,242 new cases as of Nov 8, with 279 of them in Peel Region.

"It's time for a reality check, if we don't get this pandemic under control by adhering to the new measures then we will be forced again in full lock down. Ultimately, the outcome will be a reflection of our actions and decisions," said Thompson.

For further information, please visit peelregion.ca.