

WHEN COVID HIT ~ WE HIT HARDER STILL PUBLISHING EVERY WEEK

Doug Ford extends Ontario's stay-at-home order until June 2

With the new, more contagious variants continuing to pose significant risks, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has extended the Stay-at-Home Order (O. Reg. 265/21) until at least June 2, 2021. All public health and workplace safety measures under the provincewide emergency brake will also remain in effect. During this time, the government will prepare to administer the Pfizer vaccine to youth between the ages of 12 and 17, beginning the week May 31, 2021, as the province also finalizes plans to gradually and safely reopen the province.

"While we are seeing positive trends as a result of the public health measures put in place, we cannot afford to let up yet," said Premier Ford. "We must stay vigilant to ensure our ICU numbers stay down and our hospital capacity is protected. If we stay the course for the next two weeks, and continue vaccinating record number of Ontarians every day, we can begin looking forward to July and August and having the summer that everyone deserves."

Thanks to the collective efforts of Ontarians in following pub-

lic health and workplace safety measures, the province continues to make considerable progress in the fight to control the third wave of COVID-19. This past week (May 2 to 8), the provincial cases rate decreased by 14.8 per cent, with the positivity rate also decreasing to 7.7 per cent compared to 8.6 per cent the previous week. From May 5 to 12, the number of patients with COVID-related critical illness in intensive care has decreased from 877 to 776. Despite improvements, key indicators remain high and more time is required before the province can safely lift the Stay-at-Home Order. From May 3 to 9, the provincial cases rate remained very high at 134.9 cases per 100,000 people, and per cent positivity was above the high alert threshold of 2.5 per cent. Hospitalization and ICU admissions also remain too high and well above the peak of wave two.

Based on this data, the government has extended the provincewide Stay-at-Home Order that is set to expire on May 19 until at least June 2, 2021. The impacts of these measures will continue to be evaluated over the coming weeks, with consideration

being made to the reopening of outdoor recreational amenities on June 2, subject to current trends continuing.

"While the latest data shows that public health measures are having an impact, the situation in our hospitals remains precarious and variants continue to pose a significant risk," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Experience from other jurisdictions shows that driving transmission to very low levels is needed in order to end the third wave. We must stay the course as we continue to quickly vaccinate more Ontarians, including our children and youth."

In addition, all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools in the province will continue to operate under teacher-led remote learning. Data is to be assessed on an ongoing basis and medical experts, including the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and other health officials will be consulted to determine if it may be safe to resume in-person learning. Beginning the week of May 31, youth in Ontario between 12 and 17 years of age and their family members who have not received a vaccine will be eligible to book an appointment to receive their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, including at special dedicated youth and family clinics throughout the weeks of June 14 and 21.

"Expanding vaccines to youth 12 and up will bring us one step closer to normalcy for our students," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "We are focused on delivering a safe, stable, and well-resourced learning experience with an additional \$1.6-billion in resources to protect students and school communities in the 2021-22 school year."

The province will work with public health units to offer both doses of vaccine to youth aged 12 to 17 by the end of August, in collaboration with school boards and other partners. The rollout will be informed by the work of the Children's COVID-19 Vaccine Table and will provide access to multiple channels to support vaccinating this group, including mass vaccination clinics, community or school pop-ups, and pharmacies.

"The spread of COVID-19 continues to pose a significant threat to our health care system and the well-being of Ontarians," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "While we have made great strides, extending the Stay-at-Home order is essential to protect our communities, reduce the spread of the virus and save lives."

"Despite the progress we have made in recent weeks in our fight against this virus, we all must remain vigilant, as we are not yet at the point where we can safely exit the Stay-at-Home Order, as our health system remains under significant strain," said Dr. David



Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health. "By continuing to strictly follow all measures, we can further reduce transmission of the virus, safeguard hospital and public health capacity, and save lives."

"The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) fully supports the Government of Ontario's decision to extend the Stay-at-Home Order until at least June 2, particularly given the ongoing critical care capacity challenges facing hospitals across the province. Over the past week, Ontario has experienced a consistent downward trend in the number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care. However, there are currently 775 patients with COVID-related critical illness in adult and paediatric intensive care units (ICUs) with 37 new admissions. Hospitals are continuing to operate in a state of emergency and are doing everything they can to maintain equitable access to care. Given the continued demand for critical care services, it remains impossible for hospitals to provide non-urgent/scheduled health services at anywhere near normal levels. Hospitals are continuing to postpone some non-urgent surgeries and procedures to divert resources and redeploy staff to other higher priority areas of the hospital. The sector is continuing to take a 'Team Ontario' approach to critical care by relying on the practice of transferring patients out of hotspot regions and creating additional capacity in critical care through redeployment. As hospitals continue to address this historic crisis, it will take the unified effort of the people of Ontario if we are to continue to climb down from the third wave and reduce the risk of further waves. The OHA and its member hospitals deeply respect and appreciate the

hard work and incredibly difficult sacrifices that continue to be made. With the support of every resident continuing to adhere to public health measures and getting vaccinated,

we can stop the spread of this virus and prevent a fourth wave from ever occurring."

- Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association.

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