COVID-19 Update

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Public Health and Emergency Services
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Highlights

• We are beginning to see signs of the third wave in Waterloo Region, driven by the variants. I expect cases in Waterloo Region to continue to climb in the next one to two weeks, until the stay-at-home order will start to have an effect.
• The situation in Ontario is dire, and we are all at risk.
• The stay-at-home order and lockdown measures are critical. They reduce the opportunity for exposures to COVID-19 in our community and are more effective when applied earlier. The higher the case counts, the harder it is to bring those counts down.
• Families and schools should prepare for the possibility that there may be the need to switch to online learning following the April break.

Overall trends

• We are beginning to see signs of the third wave in Waterloo Region.
• Based on our data reported as of yesterday, April 8
  o Our current weekly incidence rate has increased over the last week to approximately 70 cases per 100,000 per week.
    ▪ The provincial average is now 133 cases per 100,000 per week.
  o We are currently managing 426 active cases and 13 active outbreaks.
  o Taking into account interim data, our latest per cent positivity has increased to 3.2 per cent.
  o Our latest reproductive rate is at 1.2 – which shows cases are increasing.
  o In Waterloo Region, there are 19 individuals in hospital, of which, five are currently in ICU.
    ▪ These numbers only take into account the number of cases which are still infectious.
    ▪ People who are hospitalized or admitted to the ICU with COVID-19 can remain there because they continue to require care for a lot longer period than their period of infectiousness.
• We have also reported a large increase in variant cases over the last week. To date, a total of 671 variant cases have been identified in Waterloo Region.
  o Of that total, 39 cases have been confirmed for the B.1.1.7 variant.
And the remaining 632 cases have screened positive for a variant.

- Variants of concern are the predominant strain in Ontario, and we are now seeing that in Waterloo Region.

**Stay-at-home order**

- I am supportive of the Province’s stay-at-home order and enhanced lockdown measures that came into effect yesterday.
- The situation in Ontario is dire, and we are all at risk.
- Though our rates are not as high as those of many other communities in Ontario right now, our rates have remained higher than they were before the second wave began in November.
- We are now seeing the third wave beginning in Waterloo Region. I expect cases in Waterloo Region to continue to climb in the next one to two weeks, until the stay-at-home order can start to have an effect.
- The new stay-at-home order and lockdown measures support residents to limit non-essential trips and reduce mobility.
- Please stay-at-home except for essential purposes, such as:
  - Getting food, groceries, or prescriptions
  - Accessing health care services, including getting vaccinated when it is your turn to do so
  - Exercising outdoors
  - Work that cannot be done remotely
  - Attending school or a post-secondary institution
- It is critical that all residents avoid social gatherings.
- The stay-at-home order and lockdown measures reduce the opportunity for exposures to COVID-19 in our community, and are more effective when they are applied earlier. The higher the case counts, the harder it is to bring those counts down.

**Schools**

- We continue to monitor our local situation closely.
- Families and schools should prepare for the possibility that there may be the need to switch to online learning following the April break.
- This would never be a decision made lightly.
- In communities with very high and accelerating rates of community spread, more children and adults will acquire COVID-19, and this will lead to impacts for schools.
- At the same time, for children’s health and learning needs, schools should be the last to close and the first to open.
- If there is a need for us to switch to online learning, we will work closely with our school board partners to keep families and staff informed of decisions with as much notice as possible.
Closing remarks

- Please continue to practice public health measures to protect yourself and loved ones:
  - Avoid social gatherings
  - Stay home unless it’s essential to go out
  - Practice physical distancing
  - Wear a mask or face covering
  - Wash your hands often
  - Avoid enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces or crowded places
  - Stay home when you are sick, self-isolate and seek testing.

- Reducing our mobility and close contacts reduces the spread of COVID-19.
- Together, we can make a difference and slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.
- We need to, again, make the most of this stay-at-home order - like we did last time.
- Thank you for all your efforts.