COVID-19 Update

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Highlights

- We are in a better situation now that we are past the peak of the Omicron wave.
- Vaccination and public health measures have reduced the impact of the Omicron variant.
- However, many have been deeply impacted by the pandemic and have lost family members or friends. I would like to extend my deepest condolences to them.
- Vaccination remains our best defence against serious outcomes and death.
- With the loosening of further measures on March 1, more people may become infected, which is why I continue to recommend a cautious approach to resuming activities including:
  - Getting a booster dose; and
  - Continuing to wear a mask in indoor settings and avoiding crowded places and enclosed spaces

Overall trends

- Local indicators are showing that the Omicron wave continues to slowly decline in Waterloo Region. The decline continues to be slower than the ascent.
  1. Wastewater signals:
     - The wastewater data up to February 22 indicated that the SARS-CO-V-2 [COVID-19] wastewater signal continues to slowly decline but remains high relative to previous waves.
  2. Per cent positivity:
     - Our latest dashboard update later today will show that the 7-day moving average of per cent positivity is now at 10.2%.
  3. Outbreaks and hospital capacity:
The number of outbreaks in high-risk settings has declined. There were 15 active outbreaks as of yesterday, including 5 in long-term care and retirement homes, 5 in congregate settings, and 5 hospital outbreaks. (This is down from 24 outbreaks on February 17.)

There continues to be a decline in hospitalizations and admissions to the ICU. It will take longer to relieve the pressure in our hospitals and across the health care system.

Next step of reopening on March 1

- Yesterday, the Province confirmed the next step of reopening would occur on March 1.
- Capacity limits will be lifted for all indoor settings.
- Provincial proof of vaccination requirements will be lifted with businesses being allowed to implement them voluntarily.
- Mask requirements will remain in place for the time being.

Closing remarks

- We’ve been on a slow and steady decline in COVID-19 trends for a few weeks now.
- The virus is still with us though and may bring new challenges.
- Vaccination remains our best defence against current and future variants.
- I encourage everyone to complete their vaccine series, including their booster.
  - Get your booster dose even if you’ve had COVID-19 (after three months is optimal)
  - A booster dose is available now for anyone 12 and older
- I ask residents to be kind and considerate of everyone’s different comfort levels with the removal of measures that have been in place to protect us.
- I want to once again thank our community for the tremendous sacrifices they’ve made, and the care they continue to show for each other.
- The challenges may not end but through your actions, you are helping better protect us now and into the future.
- Thank you.

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