



## **COVID-19 Update**

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health

Public Health and Emergency Services

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### **Current status**

- Our cases started to increase in September and we and the Province overall have entered our second wave of COVID-19.
- Our numbers fluctuate from day to day, but overall we are on an increasing trend.
- We are in a very precarious time.
- We know Toronto, Ottawa and Peel currently have the highest rates. Other mid-size health unit areas like ours have also started to see increasing rates.
- Regarding the seven day moving average of the per cent positivity of our tests:
  - This percentage has grown from 0.5% around the end of August/beginning of Sept. to 1.2% currently.
  - This means, among those tested, more are testing positive.
  - This is in line with other indicators that there's been an increase in COVID infections in the region and that the increases are not due to only testing more people.

### **Differences between Wave 1 and Wave 2**

- We've heard a lot about COVID infections rising predominantly in younger age groups, e.g. those under 40. That is true, as can be seen in our own trends in Waterloo Region (above).

- In the younger age groups, we are seeing much severe illness and hospitalizations. In Waterloo Region. We currently have 2 persons hospitalized and no additional deaths.
- But there is an important thing to remember:
  - Infections do not stay isolated to certain age groups.
  - We are already seeing this movement into other age groups in Ontario.
- Initially, Ontario's second wave of COVID-19 was primarily affecting the 20-39 year old age group, but case growth is now occurring in all other age groups.
- Society overall has 'opened up' much more in Wave 2. Cases will interact with others in various age groups, through school, through work, through family or social gatherings.

## **Keeping community transmission low**

- Overall, like elsewhere in Ontario, there's been an increased trend of people socializing in close contact with a lot more other people than they did in Wave 1.
- Ontario's Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Barbara Yaffe, said at a recent news conference that “the number of contacts per case is much higher than it was in the first wave,” which “increases the complexity of the case, contact and outbreak investigations quite a lot.”
  - That trend has been observed here as well.
- The increased number of contacts per case and the fact that businesses, workplaces, schools, daycares, etc. are open increases the scale and the complexity of case and contact management.
- The large majority of cases go to work or school (or both), which triggers a corresponding increase in the number of workplace and school settings which require follow-up in an effort to prevent further spread.
- For example, a case in a worker leads to worksite investigations and contact tracing in the workplace; a case in a school or daycare leads to class dismissals and follow-up with students / families in the class, bus, and before and after school program cohorts; and cases having close contact with many others through social events or gatherings can lead to a "web" of social contacts to follow-up with.

- So far, there have been a limited number of outbreaks in Waterloo Region and they have been fairly well controlled. There is a great deal of work "behind the scenes" with these settings in an effort to "keep a lid on it", i.e. prevent single cases from turning into outbreaks, or managing outbreaks when they occur so they can quickly come under control.
- An analogy I like to use is that of a hockey goalie. You can be a good goalie and defend against many shots (i.e. cases coming into various settings), but if the shots come at you much quicker and at much greater frequency, it will become harder and harder to prevent a puck from getting through.
- Increased spread in a community is like "more shots on goal". It leads to more cases and outbreaks in various settings.
- This is why it's so important to slow the spread in the community. It's like a good offence.

## Provincial and local measures

- In response to cases rising in Ontario, the Province put in place measures effective October 3:
  - Face coverings in all public indoor settings, such as businesses, facilities and workplaces.
  - Advising that Ontarians allow close contact only with people living in their own household and maintain two metres physical distancing from everyone else. Individuals who live alone may consider having close contact with another household.
  - Targeted measures affecting restaurants, bars, gyms and banquet halls in Ottawa, Peel, and Toronto, as a result of their higher than average rates of transmission
    - Restaurants, bars, and other food and drink establishments
      - 100 patrons maximum indoor capacity limit
      - 6 patrons per table maximum
      - Operators required to manage line-ups safely
      - Mandating contact information be collected for each patron.
    - Restricting group exercise classes at gyms and other fitness settings to 10 people

- 50 people maximum allowed at these facilities
- Meeting and event facilities, including banquet halls:
  - 50 people per facility
  - 6 people per table
- In Waterloo Region:
  - We are not subject to the additional restrictions currently in place in Toronto, Ottawa and Peel.
  - However, I will be issuing a couple of additional requirements for food and drink establishments, under the Re-Opening of Ontario Act, and they are related to:
    - Ensuring that background music or sound levels are not louder than normal conversation, so that people do not have to lean in closer to others, or raise their voices/ shout in such settings. When we do monitoring, we find that owners/ operators are working hard to comply with all the required measures. And most will cooperate with respect to the volume of music. But this will level the playing field and make it a requirement for all.
    - Requiring that operators collect contact information for each patron. This is currently the requirement in places like Toronto, Ottawa and Peel, and will speed up contact management should we require it.
  - These requirements will be issued shortly.

## **Provincial and local measures**

- In addition, this morning I issued a Section 22 Class Order for case and contact management.
- In the context of an increasing number of cases, we have started to encounter some instances where people are refusing to comply with Public Health directions, such as the direction to self-isolate. I have had to issue individual Section 22 orders.
- This Class Order, similar to ones that have been issued in Toronto, Peel, Ottawa, and other areas, will enable Public Health to act swiftly, if needed.
- This Order is not intended for the vast majority of people who are cooperating with us. Public Health is here to support cases. It is meant to make clear the expectation that compliance with important measures such as self-isolation when

you are infectious is a requirement, and is only intended for the very few people who will still refuse to comply.

## **What we need to do now**

- What are we trying to achieve?
  - Slow the spread of COVID-19, in order to prevent a rapid escalation of cases.
  - In order to keep schools and businesses open, to keep medical procedures and surgeries going, to prevent lockdowns in LTC and other vulnerable settings, as much as can.
- The more it quickly escalates, the less we have the option to use targeted measures, and the more likely significant closures & shutdowns will become necessary.
- What we need to do now:
  - Limit the number of people with whom we have unprotected, close contact. Small is safer.
  - Physically distance and wear a face covering with everyone else.
    - This includes at family gatherings or while visiting friends.
  - Stay at home and away from others when we are ill. Make an appointment to be tested.
- We cannot be complacent. Our numbers are growing. As we have already seen happen elsewhere in Ontario, they can quickly spiral into widespread transmission.
- But we can act now to slow the spread. How big, how tall the second wave becomes in Waterloo Region is up to all of us.
- Let's work together, to protect each other.