

Ontario's top doctor hints at extending Stay-at-Home order

By Nate Smelle

Ontario's chief medical officer of health Dr. David Williams announced on Monday, May 10, that the number of cases needs to drop below 1,000 before the lockdown should be lifted. With the province-wide Stay-at-Home order set to expire on Thursday, May 20; and, the case count still growing by more than 2,000 a day, Dr. Williams' announcement appears to be a signal from the Ford government that the lockdown would be extended in Ontario.

"As you've seen in some areas where it [rate of COVID-19 infection] seems very low, within a week or two those have escalated and caused major outbreaks," said Dr. Williams.

"So, we have to use a different type of metric. The thing is, this time, unlike with the first and second wave, we have vaccinations. We have vaccinations going out, and we have vaccinations dropping the transmittal rates in our various areas. So, I haven't got a definite metric right now, but it certainly will be well below 1,000 [new cases of COVID-19]."

On Tuesday, May 11 Ontario recorded 2,073 new cases and 15 more deaths due to COVID-19. That same day the Hastings Prince Edward Public Health Unit reported that there were 10 new cases of COVID-19 throughout the counties. In total, there has been 1,028 cases and 10 deaths in the health unit's region.

In the meantime, the COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues. The provincial government also recently announced that all individuals 40 years of age and older were now eligible to receive the vaccine.

Recognizing that most Canadians are experiencing COVID-19 fatigue, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau held a press conference on Tuesday to encourage people to get vaccinated as soon as they become eligible. Describing vaccination as a critical element in the fight against COVID-19, he said it is important for Canadians to understand that all the vaccines approved in Canada are safe and effective. Before the restrictions in place to protect people from the virus can be lifted, Trudeau said the case numbers need to come down. As more Canadians get the vaccine, he said they expect to see the numbers decline along with the risk of resurgence.

"I think people are eager to see what a better summer could look like," Trudeau said.

"A summer in which the vast majority of Canadians have received one dose, with caseloads down across the country will allow us to gather and have barbecues with friends. We will still have to be careful in a lot of different ways but it will be a slightly better summer. That's why we're talking about a one-dose summer. We also know from previous waves that it is really important to get public health measures right and drive cases down. Vaccinations alone, one dose alone, won't allow us to have a good summer. We have to get those case numbers down. We need to crush COVID-19 right across the country; and, we need to get the vaccination rate up over 75 per cent of one dose."

Beginning on Tuesday, May 11, anyone in Ontario 40 years of age or older will be able to sign up to receive the vaccine at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>. For more information about how to reduce the spread of COVID-19, visit: www.hpePublicHealth.ca. Non-medical emergencies, outbreaks or a reportable disease that requires immediate assistance can be reported by calling: 613-966-5500/1-800-267-2803 and following the prompts.