

NEWS RELEASE

New Public Health Measures Implemented Provincewide to Keep Ontarians Safe

Government Reinforcing the Importance of Following Public Health Advice to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19

September 25, 2020

TORONTO — In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and other health experts, the Ontario government has amended order [O. Reg 364/20](#): Rules for Areas in Stage 3 under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020*, to tighten public health measures in response to the recent rise in cases of COVID-19.

Over the past five weeks, Ontario has experienced an increase in the rate of new COVID-19 cases. Private social gatherings continue to be a significant source of transmission in many local communities, along with outbreak clusters in restaurants, bars, and other food and drink establishments, including strip clubs, with most cases in the 20-39 age group. To ensure the continued health and safety of Ontarians, reduce the risk of transmission, and limit future outbreaks of COVID-19, the amended order will apply province-wide effective 12:01 a.m. on Saturday September 26 and will:

- Apply additional measures and restrictions to restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments (including nightclubs) by prohibiting the sale of alcohol after 11 p.m., and prohibiting the consumption of alcohol on the premises after 12:00 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. (including employees), and requiring establishments to close by 12:00 a.m. and remain closed until 5:00 a.m. except for takeout or delivery;
- Close all strip clubs across the province; and
- Require businesses or organizations to comply with any advice, [recommendations](#), and instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health on screening for COVID-19.

"Last week our government took immediate action to respond to the recent rise in COVID-19 cases, by setting new limits for certain social gatherings and organized public events across Ontario. As the number of cases have continued to rise, it is evident that despite the tremendous efforts of Ontarians further action is required to prevent the spread of the virus," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "On the advice of Ontario's public health officials, we are moving forward with

these measures to help keep Ontarians safe by limiting the potential for exposure in locations where the current risk of transmission is higher, and to avoid future lockdowns. Protecting the health and wellbeing of Ontarians will always remain our top priority."

In addition, the province will work with the municipal sector and other partners to encourage increased enforcement of existing businesses, facilities, workplaces, etc. to comply with all public health and workplace safety measures and restrictions in the Stage 3 regulation.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts continue to closely monitor the evolving situation to advise if public health measures need to be further tightened.

On September 22, the government began releasing details on its comprehensive plan to prepare the health system for a second wave of COVID-19. The plan, *Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19*, has so far committed to:

- Investing almost \$70 million to purchase flu vaccines to deliver a robust and expanded campaign this year, including ordering 5.1 million flu vaccine doses in partnership with the federal government and other provinces and territories, 700,000 more than was approximately used last year. This includes 1.3 million high-dose vaccines for Ontario seniors, especially those with pre-existing health conditions;
- Starting on September 25, you can get tested for COVID-19 at [select pharmacies](#) if you are not showing symptoms and eligible for testing as part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Beginning next week testing will be expanded to pharmacies in southwestern Ontario including London, Brantford, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Windsor.
- Investing \$1.07 billion to enhance and expand COVID-19 testing and case and contact management in order to quickly identify and contain new cases. This includes opening more testing locations, expanding specimen collection methods for COVID-19 testing, increasing testing capacity and hiring additional contact tracing staff. Health behaviour surveillance will also be conducted across the province to track adherence to and improve communication of the importance of following public health measures.
- Investing \$30 million to build on the province's efforts to rapidly identify and contain any COVID-19 outbreaks, including deploying hospital infection prevention and control (IPAC) resources to provide ongoing support to long-term care homes, and developing a COVID-19 surveillance strategy to monitor the disease and detect cases and outbreaks in a timely manner.

It remains critically important for everyone to continue following public health advice in order to stop the transmission of COVID-19 and protect our communities. This includes: staying home when ill or keeping your child home from school when ill, even with mild symptoms; practising physical distancing with those outside your household or social circle or at gatherings; protecting your circle; wearing a face covering when physical

distancing is a challenge or where it is mandatory to do so; washing your hands frequently and thoroughly; and adhering to gathering limits and rules.

For additional protection, the Ontario government is encouraging everyone to download the new COVID Alert app on their smart phone from the Apple and Google Play app stores.