

Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine arrives at local health unit

Written By Paula Brown

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) has received their first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

A spokesperson from the local health unit said the first shipment of the vaccine arrived at around 9 a.m. on Tuesday (Jan. 5), and that Public Health would begin the regional vaccine program starting Jan. 7.

"This is tremendous news for our region," said Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDG Public Health. "I'm grateful for Pfizer's ongoing support in ensuring we could begin vaccinations as soon as possible.

The announcement from WDG Public Health comes days after the health unit said they would be cancelling and rescheduling 500 long-term care and retirement home staff vaccination appointments due to a delay in the shipment of the Pfizer vaccine.

"This is obviously a disappointment," said Dr. Mercer in a press release from Monday (Jan. 4). "Public Health has been preparing to begin vaccinating our region against COVID-19 for months. While we can all recognize this is a complex logistical challenge, I share frustration of everyone in the region at this delay. I want to assure residents of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph that Public Health remains ready to administer the vaccine as soon as it arrives."

WDG Public Health initially reported on Dec. 30 that they would be receiving their first batch of the COVID-19 vaccine on Jan. 4, and would be launching the full vaccination program on Jan. 5.

Dr. Mercer in the press release describes the shipment of the vaccine as a "major moment" for the region.

"Receiving our first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine marks the beginning of the final phase of this pandemic, as we move toward providing a vaccine for everyone who wants it," she said, also noting that it will take several months before the vaccine is available to everyone.

The vaccination program will start with staff members at long-term care and retirement homes and essential caregivers before moving to other high-risk healthcare providers.

Public Health says that vaccinations will be done at the WDGPH offices in Guelph due to transportation and storage requirements. However, other clinics will become available as more vaccines arrive in the region, according to Danny Williamson, WDG Public Health communications specialist.

Public Health is looking at enhancing their refrigeration capacity going forward.