

Dufferin County moves to 'Red' zone for COVID-19

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Dufferin County has officially moved into the 'Red' zone of the COVID-19 framework, following recommendations made by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH), brought about by the rising number of new and active cases in Wellington and Guelph.

'Dr. Mercer made the recommendation because she had significant concerns in certain areas in our jurisdiction, that [case numbers] weren't going down and we're continuing to go in the other direction,' said Rita Isley, WDGPH director of community health.

Dr. Nicola Mercer, CEO and WDGPH Medical Officer of Health (MOH), along with Chief (MOH) Dr. David Williams, recommended last Wednesday (Dec. 9) that the provincial government move the region into the 'Red' zone of the COVID-19 framework. On Dec. 11 the province made the announcement of the move, which became effective on Monday.

When speaking with the Free Press, Isley said Public Health's decision to increase restrictions isn't solely based off the number of cases in the region but rather the reproductive rate of the virus.

'That mean how quickly it is spreading when someone gets in contact with a case or comes in contact with COVID, how many people get infected after that,' explained Isley. 'We're also looking at the complexity of the cases, so that mean we're looking at how full our hospital are and what's happening in our outbreak in our facilities.'

While Dufferin County has been moved along with Wellington and Guelph, Isley said that Public Health's concern with Dufferin County isn't as significant.

'Our numbers are much higher in those [other] areas and we have more outbreaks and more activity,' said Isley.

With the move into 'Red,' restrictions include public and private events being limited to five people indoors and 25 people outdoors. Gyms, fitness centres, restaurants and gambling establishments have been limited to 10 patrons at a time, while movies theatres and performing arts spaces have been closed. Families should also not visit other households or allow visitors into their home.

Despite the restrictions to restaurants and retailers, Isley said that Public Health hasn't seen a lot of cases in restaurants, stores, or grocery stores, adding that they're seeing transmission mostly in social venues, such as parties.

'Restricting people's movement and slowing people down is a really good way to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus,' said Isley.

As numbers of COVID-19 cases rise in the region, there have been a number of positive cases within schools. At the time of print, there are a total of 16 cases from 10 schools in the Upper Grand District School Board, which falls in the WDGPH borders.

'We have seen that our school are not as significant of a concern as other places and some of the reason are is that it's the same people every day, Monday to Friday, that are in the class room,' said Isley. 'It's not quite the same as mingling in a grocery store or going to a restaurant that's crowded.'

The framework for a move to a lockdown include increase of weekly cases, increasing cases in people over 70, increasing outbreaks among vulnerable populations, and hospitals and ICU capacity at risk of being overwhelmed.

Dufferin County officially move to the 'Red' zone on Monday (Dec. 14).