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Ontario rolls out vaccine passport for certain ?non-essential? businesses

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Ontario government will soon require people to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination status to access certain businesses and settings.

The province announced last Wednesday (Sept. 1) that as of Sept. 22 Ontarians will need to show proof of full vaccination (two doses plus 14 days), and photo identification to access a number of non-essential businesses and restaurants.

Premier Doug Ford, who previously said the vaccine passport would create a ?split society?, said at the conference on Sept. 1 that the certificate is necessary to avoid further lockdowns and the spread of the COVID-19 virus, as the province continues to face the delta variant and a fourth wave.

?After in-depth discussions with our medical experts we've landed on a vaccine certificate policy that is based on evidence and the best advice,? said Ford.

The vaccine certificate policy is focused on higher risk in-door settings where face coverings cannot always be worn. Businesses that will require vaccination proof include sporting events and facilities, casinos, bingo halls, concert venues, theatres, cinemas, banquet halls and conference centres, nightclubs, and restaurants (excluding outdoor patios and takeout/delivery).

The province said the vaccine certificate will not be necessary at retail stores, banks, salons and barbershops, places of worship, and youth sporting venues. It will also not be required to receive medical care, access other essential services, or workplaces.

?The venues that we have chosen are responsive to the risk that we've found in Ontario,? said Dr. Kieran Moore, Ontario's Medical Officer of Health. ?If the risk increase in other venues we can add and implement additional measure to protect Ontarians.?

Those who cannot receive a vaccine due to a medical exemption will be permitted entry with a doctor's note until recognized medical exemptions can be joined as part of the digital vaccine certificate. Children under the age of 12 will also be exempted.

As the province works to introduce a digital vaccine certificate by October 22, residents are able to use paper printed or PDF vaccine receipts with relevant information to prove they are fully vaccinated.

Residents will need to show their vaccination receipt when entering alongside photo identification including a driver's license or health card.

By the end of October, the province is looking to have a digital vaccine receipt which features a QR code that can be kept on your phone. A new app is also being launched for businesses that can scan and verify the receipt with a checkmark or ?X? to confirm vaccination status.

Businesses and facilities will begin requiring proof of vaccination starting Sept. 22.