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Provincial government orders all Mennonite schools, churches to close

Written By PAULA BROWN

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Old Order Mennonite schools and churches that fall in the regions of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) have been ordered to close amid rising numbers of COVID-19.

WDGPH Medical Officer of Health and CEO, Dr. Nicola Mercer, issued the Section 22 order for Old Order Mennonite's last Thursday (Nov. 12), which Public Health says will ?help address the growing risk of COVID-19 in this community.?

?I am saddened by the need for this extraordinary step,? said Mercer in a press release for the order. ?I do not take the issuing of Section 22 Orders lightly, but COVID-19 poses a serious health risk to the Old Order Mennonite Community and to all of us in the region. Sometimes we need to make difficult decisions to prevent the unchecked spread of this virus.?

With the Section 22 order, which is under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, members of the community are also required to follow specific public health instructions and restrictions on gatherings.

The region has seen an increasing number in positive COVID-19 cases, with two known outbreaks within the Mennonite community. Public Health says that the uptake of health measures have been low.

The Section 22 order, issued by Mercer requires that the closure of places of worship, prohibiting ?persons from entering or remaining in the place of worship.?

?Public Health has confirmed cases within the community but cannot conduct its contact tracing because this information is not being provided,? the press release stated.

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health reported 23 new confirmed cases of the virus the day that the order was given (Nov. 12) and had 101 confirmed active cases of COVID-19 in the regions.

Public Health says they will be working with the Old Order Mennonite community to stop the spread of COVID-19.