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Public Health confirms case of Brazilian Variant in region

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) has identified the first local case of the COVID-19 Brazilian variant (P1).

The local health unit issued a statement on Friday (April 16) confirming the case.

?This is a critical moment for our region,? said Dr. Nicola Mercer, chief medical officer and CEO of WDG Public Health, in a press release.

According to Public Health, variants of COVID-19 have shifted case numbers in the region dramatically and now make up 70 per cent of all local cases. The health unit also noted that case rates have quadrupled over the past two weeks and are driven mainly by cases in people under the age of 40.

The first case of a COVID-19 variant was originally identified in the region in February as the UK (B 1.1.7) variant.

On Friday, WDG Public Health reported 634 active cases of COVID-19 in the region, with 117 of those within Dufferin County.

?There can be no doubt- this is a dangerous time,? said Mercer in the press release. ?If you have been relaxed about public health measures up until now please change, for the sake of your family and loved ones.?

Dr. Mercer in the press release requested residents to follow a number of rules including only leaving their home for work, exercise or the most essential reasons, always wearing a mask around others, maintaining a six-foot distance, pre-registering for the vaccines, and not getting together indoors with friends and family.

?I know this pandemic has already forced you to sacrifice so much. I know each of you is exhausted by what you've been through and fearful of what still lies ahead,? said Mercer. ?But, I am afraid we must follow this strict behaviour for one more month.?

Mercer added that the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is ?like nothing we have experience during the past year.?

?Make no mistake COVID-19 variants of concern move more easily between people and increase the risk of debilitating illness or death ? especially among those from age 20-40. Projections show us how bad the situation could get if we don't change our behaviours? said Mercer. ?Projections also show hope on the horizon as vaccines continue to arrive. Other countries have proven that if we can get 75 per cent of the population vaccinated we can get our lives back.?

?We all want this to be over soon. We all want the people we love the most to be here when it does end.?