

Medical officer of health calls for continued caution

Feb. 16, 2021

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Dr. Piotr Oglaza, the medical officer of health and CEO of Hastings Prince Edward Public Health made an announcement on Feb. 8 in regards to the health unit moving back into the Green-Prevent level of the provincial reopening framework on Wednesday, Feb. 10.

In order to enhance the protection to the community, Dr. Oglaza has implemented the following restrictions in addition to the provincial Green Zone restrictions:

? Bookings for accommodation, personal service settings, and dine-in food services shall be accepted only for individuals residing in regions where Stay at Home Order has been lifted (exceptions will include booking accommodation for individuals who are travelling to our region for essential reasons as defined by the Ontario's Stay at Home Order).

? Dine-in services shall be limited to six people per table.

? Contact information shall be required for all patrons attending local food service establishments and personal service settings.

? Retail businesses shall be required to maintain/post a safety plan. Employees and patrons shall wear appropriate face coverings or PPE.

? Retail businesses shall not play music at a volume any louder than a normal conversation.

? Patrons shall not be permitted to line up inside a retail setting, or to line up/congregate outside a retail setting unless they are wearing a face covering and able to maintain two meters of distance.

These additional restrictions have been put in place through a Class 22 order. HPEPH will continually monitor the status of the provincial Stay at Home Order, which remains in place across much of Ontario until Feb. 16, at 12:01 a.m. HPEPH will also continue to monitor provincial rates of COVID-19 and restrictions in other regions, and will review and update the Class 22 Order.

?We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing work and sacrifices being made by local residents, businesses, and other establishments to protect one another and keep case rates low in our region,? says Dr. Oglaza. ?While many businesses and establishments will reopen tomorrow, we must remember this is not a return to normal. In order to maintain our progress, all residents are asked to remain thoughtful about daily choices, as our actions can have a huge impact on efforts to stop the spread of illness.?

While the Hastings and Prince Edward Counties are in the Green-Prevent Zone there are provincial restrictions for the public:

? that while small gatherings, limited to 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors are allowed, all residents are asked to continue to limit close contacts to those within their household. Physically distance with all others, and wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible.

? Avoid travelling to, or hosting guests from, other regions, in particular regions where a Stay at Home order is in effect.

? Stay home when ill and get tested if you have symptoms (even if mild).

? Wash your hands often, and clean frequently touched surfaces.

? Download the COVID-19 app to protect yourself and others.

?In our area we are not going back to pre-COVID-19 normal,? says Dr. Oglaza. ?This is going back to the provincial framework where we were before. It is extremely important to remain vigilant and to maintain all of the gains that have been made through everyone's hard work. I remind everyone that the COVID-19 rates are still high in other regions and there is also concern for the emerging new variants which could change the way epidemiology looks like locally and through the province.?

Updates will continue to be loaded to the HPEPH web site www.hpepublichealth.ca for local residents and businesses. If the answers to specific questions cannot be found there are inquiry forms available on the web site.