

CONTINUING THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Stephen Lecce, Ontario Minister of Education has announced that schools across Niagara will be allowed to re-open on Monday, February 08, 2021. Lecce indicated that in-class learning is being allowed “because it is safe”. The province has introduced new measures to protect students and staff. They include the following;

- Provincewide access, in consultation with local public health units, to targeted asymptomatic testing for students and staff.
- A mandatory masking requirement for students in grades 1 to 3 and a masking requirement for grades 1 to 12 outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Providing 3.5 million high-quality cloth masks to schools as a back-up supply for grade 1 to 12 students.
- Enhanced screening for secondary school students and staff.
- Guidance discouraging students from congregating before and after school.
- Temporary certification of eligible teacher candidates who are set to graduate in 2021 to stabilize staffing levels, following high levels of absenteeism.

There is some good news, in that it appears the stay-at-home order issued by the province has reduced infection levels. The curve appears to be flattening and we are seeing more people recover than are being infected, which will ease the burden on our healthcare system. However, we need to see further reduction in infection rates. I realize COVID-19 fatigue is setting in but the ***best way to reduce the spread is by staying home.***

We share a responsibility to stop the spread of this deadly pandemic that has taken such a devastating toll. Together we can save lives and ultimately end the pandemic by following the rules. The number of lives lost and the speed at which they are being lost, particularly in our seniors' population, is unacceptable so we must act now.

Please continue to do your part and remain vigilant and take precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19. Before going out, ask yourself if you must do so and avoid all unnecessary travel. We are a resilient community, by working together, getting everyone vaccinated and supporting our frontline workers we will succeed.

Let's all take a moment to remember and mourn the significant number of members of our community, the region, and everywhere who have tragically lost their lives due to COVID-19.

Please stay safe, stay home and save lives.

For further information, visit [COVID-19 public health measures and restrictions | COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) in Ontario](#)

Visit the Niagara Region vaccination statistics page for the progress on vaccination administration [COVID-19 Vaccinations Administered by Niagara Region Public Health - Niagara Region, Ontario.](#)