

June 22, 2020

Statement from Toronto Board of Health Chair Joe Cressy on Toronto Moving into Stage 2 of Reopening

Today, the Ontario Government announced that Toronto will be joining much of Ontario in transitioning to Stage 2 in the Province's Reopening Framework. In Stage 2, a number of businesses and services can resume operations, including restaurant patios and personal care services.

While much of Ontario moved to Stage 2 earlier this month, it was clear at the time that Toronto wasn't ready yet, which is why we advocated for a regional approach that accounted for differences across the province. Over the past two weeks, the daily case counts in our city have shown that the measures we have taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are working.

During this time, we were able to refine our metrics and monitor our progress. We developed a public COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard, which has made it possible to consistently assess how we are doing in four key areas: virus spread and containment; laboratory testing; healthy system capacity; and public health capacity. We have tools to track active outbreaks in congregate living sites like shelters and long-term care homes, and have developed neighbourhood maps to monitor transmission in different parts of our city and inform targeted responses.

All of this work has helped to ensure that we are where we need to be. While I am optimistic about moving forward, I also know that we need to remain cautious. Living with the reality of COVID-19 is a risk that we will have to continue to manage every single day. While we have made progress on areas like case and contact tracing and data collection, there is still much work to be done.

We need to continue to improve processes for data management and sharing between testing labs and public health units, as well as taking action to limit transmission for the most vulnerable in our communities. This means exploring accommodation options for people who are underhoused so that they can self-isolate safely, and increasing protections for workers in precarious, front-line positions. These issues will be discussed in greater detail at the upcoming Board of Health meeting on July 2, 2020.

With summer here, I am glad that people will be able to enjoy more of the services that our great city has to offer. But we are not out of the woods yet. As I have noted before, moving forward with re-opening means that we will see more cases of COVID-19, because we cannot completely eliminate the risk of this virus until there is a vaccine. We will experience new outbreaks, and we will, sadly, see deaths. This is inevitable. I know that our Medical Officer of Health and our team at Toronto Public Health will continue to assess our progress each step of the way, and all our work will go towards ensuring we have the tools we need to manage virus spread and mitigate harm.

If we keep following the recommendations of our public health experts, we can work together to enjoy this season while looking out for one another.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Cressy', with a long, sweeping underline.

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