

July 29, 2020

Statement from Toronto Board of Health Chair Joe Cressy on Toronto's Move to Stage 3

Today, the Ontario Government announced that Toronto will be moving forward to Stage 3 in the Province's re-opening plan this Friday, July 31. In preparation for this transition, Toronto City Council has approved a series recommendations from Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Eileen de Villa, which set out additional public health and safety measures in order to prevent a spike or new increase in COVID-19 cases.

Over the past five months, Torontonians have come together and made tremendous sacrifices to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our city. Our collective efforts have been successful, not only at flattening the curve and protecting our health care system, but also in getting daily case counts down to the single digits. The challenge now is to make sure that this hard work is not squandered as we continue to reopen businesses and services in our city.

The measures approved by City Council include new requirements for bars and restaurants, which will open for indoor dining as part of Stage 3. As bars and restaurants have been linked to new outbreaks in other cities, Toronto is proceeding with caution in order to try to make indoor dining as safe as possible. These requirements, which are unique to Toronto, include capacity and table size limits to ensure physical distancing indoors; staff screening; mandatory record-keeping of all patrons, which will be available to Toronto Public Health if needed; and requiring that patrons must remain seated at all times, except for going to or from the washroom or paying.

We also know the importance of physical distancing in helping to keep people safe, and that wearing masks indoors can help reduce virus transmission. City Council has approved the creation of a temporary by-law mandating that face masks or coverings must be worn in the common areas of apartment and condominium buildings, and the continuation of the City of Toronto's physical distancing by-law, requiring appropriate physical distancing in parks and public squares.

Getting to Stage 3 is an important achievement for our city, and was only possible thanks to the commitment and dedication of residents across Toronto. However, we need to remember that our work is not over yet. COVID-19 continues to pose a significant risk until there is a widely-available treatment or vaccine. Increasingly, Toronto Public Health data shows that COVID-19 is exposing the deep inequalities present in our city, as this virus is disproportionately impacting people with lower incomes, who are racialized or visible minorities that live in overcrowded housing and work in front-line and/or precarious workplaces. These are the people that we have to keep in mind as we cautiously move forward into the next stage of this pandemic.

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

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