
MEMORANDUM

CL-C 74-2020

Subject: Improved Guidance for Food and Restaurant Establishments

Date: July 23, 2020

To: Niagara Regional Council

From: Andrea Feller, Associate Medical Officer of Health

We are pleased that Niagara is able to move to Stage 3 this Friday, July 24. Everyone's actions, commitment, leadership and vigilance across Niagara's municipalities have helped keep cases down.

Following on that, we need to share with you a concern and information at this time. Given the short timelines to prepare a document for Council, we are sending this in memo format, which has a quicker approvals process than a report.

Case increases are being seen in Niagara, Ontario, parts of Canada, and some areas worldwide. These are largely linked to re-opening. Niagara's current situation includes three out of the last five days (as of July 22 reporting) with cases of four or above. This is in contrast to June and the rest of July, when there were very few days with cases above three, and days with no cases at all.

While it is too soon to say whether this is a cluster that will not persist, or it is the beginning of a large growth in cases with resumption of community spread, it nonetheless is worrisome. Ontario and other parts of Canada, similarly, have seen recent increased numbers being reported despite only recently moving to Stage 3 in the case of Ontario.

Coupled with this, well-publicized outbreaks have emerged in areas that have reopened bars and restaurants including in Western Canada. These areas mostly had a lower density of cases compared to Ontario, or very similar, but not higher density. However, Ontario's restrictions are more restrictive for bars, than those of other provinces.

On July 18, 2020, a letter (attached) was sent to Premier Ford by the City of Toronto, asking for increased protective restrictions and measures in Stage 3 for food and beverage establishments. As Niagara is about to enter Stage 3, given the concerning

evidence about outbreak risk and a backdrop of increasing cases provincially and potentially, locally, and the need for local business owner/operators to have clear guidance as soon as possible, we want to ensure Council is aware of this letter, should Niagara Region choose to endorse it.

Comments on specific points in the letter:

1. Capacity limits for various settings differ in Ontario currently (e.g. places of worship v. bars/restaurants). Harmonization based on evidence will be beneficial, and will provide improved guidance and expectations around the numbers of patrons that can be present at any given time.
2. Collection of contact information for patrons is standard in personal services settings, but not typical in bars and restaurants that do not require reservations, in this country. New Zealand and the UK are examples of two countries that do not usually collect this information, but are doing so as part of the pandemic. Given the risk, uncertainties, and the critical importance of having accurate contact information for the protection of all residents, this temporary measure during the pandemic is recommended.
3. Limiting hours of operation has been an important tool to help businesses implement enhanced cleaning, training time, and other preparations. It likely has also assisted in decreasing the numbers of patrons indoors overall. However, it is unknown how effective or appropriate this recommendation is in the context of bars and restaurants for the purposes of COVID-19 prevention.
4. While the City of Toronto is not opposed to province-wide implementation, it specifically asks for these measures for Toronto. Unlike other measures that depend heavily on local conditions and lend themselves better to regional variation, settings such as bars and restaurants can be considered to have a very similar risk in any area where cases of COVID are occurring or can be expected to occur.

We recommend that Council support the endorsement of the letter from Toronto, with wording for a suggested motion being as follows:

That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to write a letter to the Minister of Health and Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario expressing the endorsement of the City of Toronto's letter dated July 18, 2020 respecting Stage 3 reopening, and requesting that

the province apply the recommendations that are most likely to assist in managing the pandemic consistently across the province.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Andrea Feller, MD MS FAAP FACPM
Associate Medical Officer of Health