

With Ontario reporting 407 new COVID-19 cases today, the second straight daily increase over 400, the government is extending restrictions on unmonitored and private social gatherings to the entire province.

Premier Doug Ford made the announcement on Saturday morning (September 19) at a media conference at Queen's Park along with health minister Christine Elliott and associate chief medical officer of health Dr. Barbara Yaffe.

"The alarm bells are ringing," Ford said. "And too much of it is being tied to people who aren't following the rules. People who think it's okay to hold parties, to carry on as if things are back to normal. They aren't."

Ford said the government needs to take "decisive action" and, effective immediately, is extending the same restrictions currently in place in Toronto, Ottawa, and Peel Region for unmonitored and private social gatherings — a maximum of 10 people indoors and a maximum of 25 people outdoors — to every region in Ontario for the next 28 days.

"We made this decision on the advice of our chief medical officer of health, Dr. Williams, and our public health team," Ford added. "Folks, we can't have these wild parties right now. It's just way, way too risky."

Unmonitored and private social gatherings include functions, parties, dinners, gatherings, BBQs, or wedding receptions held in private residences, backyards, parks, and other recreational areas. Indoor and outdoor events and gatherings cannot be merged together — gatherings of 35 (25 outdoors and 10 indoors) are not permitted. Under new legislation, organizers and hosts of illegal gatherings face a minimum \$10,000 fine, while individuals who attend such gatherings can already be fined \$750 each.

"We can't have people merging indoor and outdoor parties, so don't try to get around the rules," Ford said. "This is about everyone's health and safety, and we have to come down hard on the rule-breakers. We have to crack down on the illegal parties."

The new limits do not apply to events or gatherings held in staffed businesses and facilities, such as bars, restaurants, cinemas, convention centres, banquet halls, gyms, places of worship, recreational sporting or performing art events. Existing rules, including public health and workplace safety measures for these businesses and facilities, continue to be in effect.

With the 407 new cases reported today, the number of active cases in Ontario is now at 5,707, an increase of 230. Most of the new cases are in Toronto (129), Peel (94), Ottawa (55), and York (28) with smaller increases in Halton (18), Waterloo (14), Hamilton (12), Simcoe Muskoka (11), Middlesex-London (10), Windsor-Essex (6), Durham (6), and a new outbreak in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (14). The remaining 22 public health units in Ontario are reporting five or fewer cases, with 14 reporting no new cases.