



NEWS

Health unit expects Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland to move into yellow zone

Recent surge in positive COVID-19 cases and outbreaks will likely lead province to move Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit to yellow protect

By [Catherine Whitnall](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

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A significant surge in positive COVID-19 cases will likely see the local health unit [change colours](#).

Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit medical officer of health Dr. Lynn Noseworthy said, although the area is currently at the green level, increased numbers of positive COVID-19 cases as well as five outbreaks in Northumberland

County - three businesses, a congregate setting and a school - she anticipates moving to the yellow 'protect' level next week.

Noseworthy pointed out that, while the local health unit's incident rates are well below many other areas, the combination of proximity to other health unit regions and recent local outbreak cases are certainly cause for concern.

Since the end of June, the local health unit reported 120 new cases of COVID-19; 46 of these in just 14 days. The local positivity rate, reported through assessment and testing centres, sat at .4 in early November, but between Nov. 22 and 28, rose to .7. Noseworthy also points out the fact the health unit is surrounded by health unit regions already in advanced levels. Peterborough and Hastings and Prince Edward counties are yellow, Simcoe Muskoka district, orange, and Durham Region is red.

"So we're surrounded by health units that have had higher levels of activity which we need to take seriously," said Noseworthy who anticipates the province will likely announce the local colour change on Friday (Dec. 4). "When you look at Southern Ontario, as of last week, HKPR and [Leeds, Grenville] Lanark were the only two health units still in the green zone."

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Moving into the yellow zone means enhanced targeted enforcement, fines and enhanced education to limit further transmission. Increased restrictions means for bars and restaurants, no alcohol will be served after 11 p.m., tables will be set for a maximum of six, operating hours will be reduced, contact records for all customers will be kept and music will be turned down so people don't have to talk louder and potentially spread droplets farther.

For gyms and recreational facilities, it means three-metre physical distancing, attendance by appointment-only, and businesses having to develop and post safety plans.

Noseworthy is especially concerned that the health unit's reproduction rate is currently "hovering between yellow and orange," but notes this is only one factor that determines zones and responses. She is

hopefully optimistic that the area will not advance to the more severe levels but pointed out a large part of this will rest with the public.

“This is the time for us to consider what we can do to protect ourselves and others. . . Think about what you are doing,” said Noseworthy, affirming the basics of wearing a mask, hand washing, sanitizing and physical distancing are more important than ever. “And don’t go out if you feel ill.”

With the growing numbers of cases and outbreaks, the health unit is moving into surge levels for staffing. This means individuals who normally delivered health unit programming will focus on pandemic response.

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