



NEWS

Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland expected to be placed in Orange Zone when lockdown lifts on Feb. 16

'Pretty much inevitable:' First COVID-19 variant discovered in Port Hope-area resident

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

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

When the lockdown lifts on Tuesday (Feb. 16), area residents will likely have to adhere to [orange zone restrictions](#).

Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit acting medical officer of health Dr. Ian Gemmill said Wednesday (Feb. 10) that, just prior to the lockdown and stay-at-home orders, the area was yellow but COVID-19 numbers had the area “on

the cusp” of orange. He noted, while the final decision rests with the province and will likely be officially announced on Friday (Feb. 12), it makes sense to start off with that status as it offers the best position.

“We can always go back to yellow,” said Gemmill, who urges the public to stay the current course. “I’m very worried that if people don’t respect the advice, we could fall back into those high numbers again.”

In the last two weeks, the local health unit has recorded 117 cases; about nine daily. The majority come from outbreaks, particularly Caressant Care McLaughlin Road Nursing Home, where 23 active resident cases and two additional deaths were reported Feb. 10. Just as worrisome, said Gemmill, is the fact there is no known contact for about 25 per cent of cases.

The health unit also has one confirmed case of a COVID-19 variant. The Port Hope-area resident is believed to have contracted the virus through work and had already been in isolation when identified.

“This was pretty much inevitable,” said Gemmill, noting the variants are known to spread quicker and easier. “The fact that we’ve had one is not a surprise.”

He also anticipates it will not be the only one.

The health unit is also dealing with a large group outbreak resulting from a recent birthday party celebration.

Both are examples of the continued need to exact extra caution, even after restrictions are lifted.

“There will be a change in approach to control the virus, but in no way diminishes the need to be vigilant,” said Gemmill, who asks everyone to limit their movements “until we have the vaccine rolled out.”

Related content

[Ontario colour zones: Track your region’s COVID-19 status](#)

[Here's how Ontario's work](#)

Although the health unit has received 1,000 more vaccine doses, these will be administered to long-term-care facilities only.

“The majority of people have not had the virus, so they’re susceptible,” said Gemmill. “This is the only way we can keep this virus in check until we can get some vaccine in arms in the coming months.”

Headlines newsletter

Top stories delivered to your inbox.

[Sign Up](#)

Catherine Whitnall is a reporter with MyKawartha. She can be reached at cwhitnall@mykawartha.com. Follow her on [Twitter](#) and MyKawartha on [Facebook](#)

Tags: [Hyper Local](#), [Human Interest](#), [News](#)

[REPORT AN ERROR](#)

[JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

You might be interested in



Ontario colour zones:
Track your region's COVID-19 status



Feb 09, 2021

Here's how Ontario's COVID-19 colour codes