

“We’re losing the battle between the variants and vaccines,” Ontario Premier Doug Ford said during an announcement at Queen’s Park on Friday afternoon (April 16). “The pace of our vaccine supply has not kept up with the spread of the new COVID variants. We are on our heels but, if we dig in, remain steadfast, we can turn this around. We’re down but by no means are we out.”

“The reality is, there are few options left,” Ford said. “It comes down to three things: limiting mobility, enforcing the rules, and getting vaccines into arms. And, as your Premier, it falls on me to make the difficult choices. It falls on me to do what’s necessary.”

Effective immediately, the government is extending the provincial state of emergency and the stay-at-home order for an additional two weeks, for a total of six weeks, until Thursday, May 20th. A six-week stay-at-home order was one of the recommendations presented by the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table earlier on Friday.

The stay-at-home requires everyone to remain at home except for specified purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services (including getting vaccinated), for outdoor exercise, or for work that cannot be done remotely.

In addition to extending the stay-at-home order for two weeks, the province is implementing the following public health and workplace safety measures, effective at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday (April 17):

- Prohibiting all outdoor social gatherings and organized public events, except for with members of the same household or one other person from outside that household who lives alone or a caregiver for any member of the household
- Closing all non-essential workplaces in the construction sector
- Reducing capacity limits to 25 per cent in all retail settings where in-store shopping is permitted. This includes supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers’ markets, and other stores that primarily sell food and pharmacies. Previously, capacity limits for retail settings was 50 per cent.
- Closing all outdoor recreational amenities, such as golf courses, basketball courts, soccer fields, and playgrounds, with limited exceptions.

Also effective on Saturday, police officers and other provincial offences officers (including special constables and First Nation constables) will be given temporary enhanced authority to enforce the stay-at-home order. They will have the authority to require any person to provide their home address and purpose for not being at their residence, as well as the authority to stop vehicles to inquire about a person’s reasons for leaving their residence.

VIDEO: Solicitor general Sylvia Jones announcing temporary police powers

Effective at 12:01 a.m. on Monday (April 19), the government is also limiting the capacity of weddings, funerals, and religious services, rites or ceremonies to a maximum of 10 people indoors or outdoors. Drive-in services will be permitted.