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Northumberland, Kawartha residents can expect 'fewer appointments' at mass COVID-19 vaccine clinics

Supply issues persist, but public health hopeful all local clinics can reach full capacity into May

By [Sarah Hyatt](#) Northumberland News

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Struggles with COVID-19 vaccine supply – and reduced clinics as a result – are expected to continue for at least the next few weeks.

“Over the next couple of weeks, there will be fewer appointments at mass immunization clinics, because we have less supply, overall,” said Dr. Natalie Bocking,

the [Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit's](#) medical officer of health.

Bocking is optimistic, however, with the recent federal announcement of an increase in Pfizer supply – hopefully coming mid-to-end May – this will change, and all clinics can reach full capacity into May.

Meeting vaccine demand in Northumberland and Kawartha has been a challenge. A [Moderna shipment was just delayed, and then weekly Pfizer shipments reduced](#) from 5,850 doses to 3,500.

But, there were no confirmed appointment cancellations (at press deadline). This is because in HKPR, appointments are only offered based on “confirmed shipments.”

“We’re still in an era of vaccine shortage for COVID-19 and so a lot of the challenges or struggles or frustrations that people are experiencing related to access to COVID-19 vaccines are rooted just in the fact that Ontario is not receiving enough supply, Canada’s not receiving enough supply, and so in HKPR, we’re not receiving the supply that we’d like to see to meet the demand,” said Bocking.

In addition, mobile teams still need to reach priority populations in some congregate/other settings. (Mobile teams are used to reach more vulnerable populations unable to make it to clinic sites; a partnership with paramedics is also in the works to reach those homebound.)

Simply put, in coming weeks, there isn’t enough supply to go around.

As a result, one week, resources may be more heavily dedicated to mobile teams and catchup on other priority groups (meaning fewer clinic appointments); and the next week vice-versa until more vaccine is available.

For instance, next week, just one mass clinic, at the Lindsay Exhibition (LEX), will continue with appointments, while follow-up mobile clinics are happening in retirement homes, other group home and congregate care settings. There will also be a community-based clinic for individuals with the highest-risk conditions, explained Bocking.

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In other words, there will be no appointments available at other clinic sites, including in Northumberland.

Some 20-plus HKPR-area pharmacies are also administering AstraZeneca doses to eligible age groups (as supply permits). More details via <https://www.hkpr.on.ca/2021/03/26/vaccination-clinics/>.

"The other avenue that vaccines have just recently been rolling out is through primary-care settings. Starting last week, there were seven primary-care teams, so these are either family health teams or community health centres."

In partnership with HKPR, these seven had started or were in the process of starting to offer AstraZeneca doses to their patients.

"We knew that as the province expanded their eligibility that we wouldn't be able to meet demand," said Bocking. "We know that approximately 29 per cent of the population in our area is over the age of 65, and we were really just starting to roll out the above age 70 when the province lowered it to age 60."

"So we knew this was going to be a challenging scenario. We had flagged it to the province... along with quite a number of other health units."

"I think, in the end, they're just trying to get as many vaccines into arms as possible, and I think that it's key to us to continue to try and target those priority populations but make it as easy as possible to get vaccinations."

On [Mondays, the health unit updates its vaccine data](#). As of April 19, within HKPR, 41,156 doses were administered to date. The total first dose count for HKPR residents is higher – 51,711 – when factoring in doses received outside the area.

This equates to about 27 per cent of HKPR's population having at least one dose, and currently, that's consistent with provincial proportions, said Bocking.

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