



NEWS

Northumberland, Kawartha seeing some improvement last week around COVID-19 activity

Medical officer of health talks age groups impacted, spread, variants, trends

By [Sarah Hyatt](#) Northumberland News

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

The Northumberland and Kawartha areas are seeing some improvement surrounding COVID-19 activity within the last week.

For the entire Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit region, as of Wednesday, April 28, a total of 1,622 COVID-19 cases had been confirmed to date. In total, 85 cases were active/unresolved, with the majority in Northumberland and

Kawartha.

“This is a significant improvement,” said Dr. Natalie Bocking, the local medical officer of health, while looking back at numbers the last week.

This time last week, there were about 180 active cases.

“This translates also to an improvement in the seven-day rolling incidence rate, which looks at the number of cases per population. Today, we’re looking at a rate of about 47 cases per 100,000 people.”

Last week, the figure was doubled.

However, while numbers were coming down some, they’re still higher than last month or earlier, noted Bocking.

Despite some decline, if not for the province-wide shutdown, HKPR would still be in the red zone given recent numbers.

With some lower numbers the last week, the 14-day case count sat at about 212 new cases throughout the region.

Northumberland’s saw the highest level of activity recently (and now to date overall with spikes this month.) Some 62 per cent of the cases the last 14 days were recorded in Northumberland.

Headlines newsletter

Top stories delivered to your inbox.

[Sign Up](#)

As for drivers of recent cases, the vast majority are still attributed to community spread, said Bocking.

In other words, recent spread is being recorded more under household and close contacts, and under the unknown category, where no source of transmission is identified (and this is often an indicator of general, broader community

transmission.)

There has been some spread attributed to outbreaks, but not as much (under 10 per cent the last two weeks). Outbreaks were also down as of Wednesday (to three ongoing), with all previous school outbreaks over. At this time last week, outbreaks were hovering around seven-eight at a time.

“We are still seeing the highest proportion of cases in the age group that is under 20 years old,” noted Bocking. “The most recent percentage being around 24 per cent of cases under the age of 20.

“The next highest age group is... 50 to 59 (years old.)”

The regional test positivity rate (seven-day average) sat at 3.31 per cent Wednesday. While lower than provincial rates, it’s still higher for HKPR, noted Bocking.

Similarly, variants of concern (VOCs) continue to increase, though again, not like elsewhere in Ontario.

In the last week, some 106 cases in HKPR have screened positive for the mutations of interest found among the VOCs. (There can be delays in this data.)

The VOCs total was 357 to date as of Wednesday, with 225 in Northumberland, 113 in Kawartha, and 19 in Haliburton.

As for whether the VOCs – like seen in other areas – are starting to cause more severe disease or outcomes here on average or that’s becoming a trend, it’s too early to say presently, but it is something public health is following, said Bocking. One of the challenges with statistics related to COVID-19 patients who pass is that they can be ill for some time, or in hospital or ICU for some time, and so those deaths aren’t always a reflection of the COVID activity at that time, the doctor noted.

In the last 14 days, there were five hospitalizations among HKPR residents (59 total to date.)

Since early last week, two Northumberland residents died as a result of the virus. To date, there have been 58 confirmed deaths in HKPR, plus 13 probable deaths due to COVID-19.

Practising public health measures is the best action residents can take right now, Bocking reminded residents.