

NEWS RELEASE

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Health Unit to Return to Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework in Red – Control Level

NIPISSING & PARRY SOUND, ON – Today the Government of Ontario confirmed the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit) will be moving to the Red – Control level of the provincial's COVID-19 Response Framework (Colour-Coded) as of March 8, 2021. The Health Unit had been effectively shutdown and under a Stay-At-Home Order since December 26, 2020, and had remained under such an order recently as the result of the recent presence of COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOCs) in the community.

Today's announcement allows the Health Unit to slowly progress to less restrictive measures, while still recognizing the ongoing importance of public health measures to protect those most vulnerable in our community. The movement to Red – Control level was based on the local COVID-19 situation, the presence of VOCs in our community, and the continued elevated case load and pandemic outcome in neighbouring health units.

"I want to thank each and every member of our community for doing their part to protect themselves, their families and their neighbours. This is not easy. Many of us have had to make significant sacrifices but together we will get through these challenging times. With the vaccine on the horizon, I am hopeful that we are inching closer to a slow return to normal," stated Dr. Jim Chirico, Medical Officer of Health.

"We have seen the COVID-19 situation can escalate very quickly, especially with the Variants of Concern. By slowly easing into the framework, I am hopeful that we can keep our COVID-19 case numbers low, including reducing the spread of VOCs. Until we have maintained a low number of cases and we've increased COVID-19 vaccination in our district, our best line of defense is to keep following public health measures," continued Dr. Chirico.

The Health Unit reminds everyone that the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones is by following public safety measures, such as continuing to stay home, regularly washing your hands or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, wearing a face covering, physically distancing, not touching your face, and coughing or sneezing into your sleeve.

There are many notable changes to entering the Red - Control level, including:

Organized Public Events, Social Gatherings and Wedding, Funeral and Religious Services, Rites and Ceremonies

- Limits for all organized public events and social gatherings, where physical distancing can be maintained:
 - 5 people indoors
 - 25 people outdoors

- Limits for religious services rites or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services, where physical distancing can be maintained (applies in any venue other than a private dwelling):
 - 30% capacity of the room indoors
 - 100 people outdoors

Restaurants, Bars and Other Food and Drink Establishments

- Capacity limits, where physical distancing can be maintained:
 - 10 patrons seated indoors
 - Limit of 4 people may be seated together
 - Require contact information for all seated patrons
 - Face coverings required except when eating or drinking only
- No buffet style service
- Establishments must be closed from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.
- Liquor sold or served only between 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- No consumption of liquor permitted between 10 p.m. to 9 a.m.
- Dancing, singing and the live performance of music is prohibited

Retail

- Capacity limits of:
 - 75% for supermarkets and other stores that primarily sell groceries, convenience stores, pharmacies
 - 50% for all other retail, including discount and big box retailers, liquor stores, hardware stores and garden centres
- Stores must post capacity limit publicly
- Stores must have passive screening for patrons (for example, posting signs outside the store front about not entering if you have COVID-19 symptoms)
 - This does not apply to indoor malls, which are required to actively screen their customers before they enter the mall. Malls can use the [patron screening tool](#) to help meet this requirement.
- Stores within the malls subject to appropriate retail measures

Personal Care Services

- Oxygen bars, steam rooms, saunas, bath houses and other adult venues, closed
- Sensory deprivation pods closed (some exceptions)
- Services requiring removal of face coverings prohibited
- Require contact information from all patrons
- Screening of patrons is required, in accordance with [instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health](#)

- A [safety plan](#) is required to be prepared and made available upon request

To read the entire [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#), visit Ontario's website.

Visit [Ontario's website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.

For more information, please visit myhealthunit.ca/COVID-19.

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