

York Regional Council calls for increased COVID-19 vaccine supply

At a special meeting of York Regional Council held last week, councillors unanimously passed a motion calling on the Prime Minister of Canada and Premier of Ontario to support efforts for equitable distribution and increased supply of COVID-19 vaccines for all hot spot communities across Ontario. York health had to shut down clinics Monday due to lack of supply. "Since the beginning of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the health, safety and well-being of York Region's 1.2 million residents remains our top priority," said York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson. "Without an immediate increase in the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to York Region's 16 identified hot spots, we cannot fully expand vaccination efforts to fully protect residents and workers in these high priority communities." Through the Government of Ontario's Vaccination Distribution Plan, the province has identified 114 high priority communities or hot spots based on postal codes, including 13 hot spots in York Region. Based on local epidemiological data, York Region has identified an additional three hot spot communities. Due to a lack of vaccine supply, York Region has been forced to prioritize six of these 16 hot spots while also limiting availability in these areas to those age 35 and older. This has also resulted in the temporary closure of vaccination clinics and adjustment of clinic hours. "York Region has made excellent progress in distributing all available vaccines to eligible priority groups," said York Region Medical Officer of Health Dr. Karim Kurji. "With a consistent supply of vaccine, we have the infrastructure in place to vaccinate residents in all eligible priority groups and hot spot areas, consistent with provincial direction." York Region appreciates the efforts of all senior levels of government to get vaccinations to all Canadians, however inequities exist in vaccine distribution to hot spot communities. "We require senior levels of government to do more in the procurement and distribution of vaccines," said City of Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti. "York Region is currently facing a surge in COVID-19 cases with an increase in variants of concern. The most effective tool to win the race against variants is the equitable distribution and increased supply of COVID-19 vaccines." Over the next two weeks, York Region, with a population of 1.2 million residents, will receive 78,390 weekly vaccine doses to support hot spot areas. The Region of Peel, meantime, with a population of 1.5 million, will receive 149,760 weekly vaccine doses while the City of Toronto, with a population of 2.9 million, will receive 246,870 weekly vaccine doses. Following this two-week period, York Region will receive 51,480 weekly doses, while Toronto will receive 135,720 doses and Peel Region will receive 66,690 doses. The Regional Municipality of York consists of nine local cities and towns and provides a variety of programs and services to 1.2 million residents and 54,000 businesses with over 650,000 employees. More information about the Region's key service areas is available at york.ca/regionalservices