

# »TORONTO STAR«

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## CITY HALL

# Expect more COVID-19 cases as Toronto moves to Stage 2 reopening, public health chair warns

By **David Rider** City Hall Bureau Chief

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Toronto is ready to move to Stage 2 reopening, the public health chair says, even though “that means that we will see more cases of COVID-19.”

Coun. Joe Cressy was both optimistic and cautious Monday after Premier Doug Ford decreed Toronto and Peel region ready to shake off many lockdown restrictions and move, starting Wednesday, to a wider reopening.

For the first time since March, residents will be able to get professional haircuts, eat and drink on restaurant patios, shop in malls and more, as long as physical distancing and other virus-containment rules are followed.

“Over the past two weeks, the daily case counts in our city have shown that the measures we have taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are working,” Cressy said in a statement.

He noted the city has a new online dashboard for residents to track new infections and other indicators, tools to track outbreaks in seniors homes and similar group settings, and online maps showing where virus hotspots exist in Toronto.

“While I am optimistic about moving forward, I also know that we need to remain cautious,” Cressy wrote. “Moving forward with reopening means that will see more cases of COVID-19, because we cannot completely eliminate the risk of this virus until there is vaccine.”

“We will experience new outbreaks, and we will, sadly, see deaths. This is inevitable.”

The new phase will see resumption of some city services paused during the pandemic. Splash pads will open Wednesday, followed by outdoor city swimming pools starting Friday and then wading pools.

CampTO, the scaled-down, physically distanced city day camps for kids aged 6 to 12, can now officially proceed. Registration for Etobicoke/York and Scarborough districts starts Wednesday at 7 a.m. People in Toronto/East York, West Toronto/York and North York districts can start signing up Thursday at 7 a.m.

Dr. Eileen de Villa, the public health chief, said that as Torontonians emerge more from their homes, her team will keep a close eye on indicators such as virus spread, health-care capacity and testing levels.

“That will be a foundational part for making a determination as to whether we need to dial back (and reimpose restrictions) or whether we can continue forward,” toward Stage 3, with most workplaces and community spaces reopened.

Infection levels dropped to the point that Toronto can move to Stage 2 because residents followed physical distancing rules, washed their hands and stuck to social circles, she said, urging Torontonians to keep up the good work.

If Torontonians follow the rules in Stage 2, Mayor John Tory said, he’s confident the city can “move safely but quickly into Stage 3.”

But last weekend Toronto might have had a taste of what's to come, with parties on Toronto beaches, including Cherry Beach, where people did not physically distance and left behind big messes.

Tory said the city has boosted the number of bylaw officers and cleanup crews but warned people not to put the city at risk.

"While we want people to enjoy our beaches, the beach parties themselves are not consistent with applicable and necessary health orders," he said.

De Villa repeated Monday that her efforts to keep a lid on infections as lockdown lifts will not include following the lead of her counterparts in Guelph and Windsor-Essex in ordering stores to mandate mask use indoors.

De Villa said the city's legal advice to her remains that she can strongly recommend cloth face coverings, but she does not have the legislative power to order their use, even though use on the TTC is mandatory starting July 2.

Rob Shirkey, a lawyer with expertise in municipal legislation, disagrees. "Dr. de Villa can issue an order to mandate masks inside commercial establishments under section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act," he said.

"There's also a strong legal argument that Mayor Tory (i.e., the head of council) can mandate masks under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act or that Council can pass a bylaw under its general health and welfare powers of the City of Toronto Act."



**David Rider** is the Star's City Hall bureau chief and a reporter covering city hall and municipal politics. Follow him on Twitter: [@dmrider](https://twitter.com/dmrider)

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