

# Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

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The Tribune and The Sentinel are teaming up to cover Niagara County as the community continues to reflect on, respond to, and ultimately recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to print newspapers, these publications will be available in their entirety – for free – at [www.wnypapers.com](http://www.wnypapers.com).

## Cuomo: 'NYS on PAUSE' extended until May 15

Enacts in-public face-covering mandate

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday announced he is continuing the "New York State on PAUSE" mandate until May 15, as he wants to see the COVID-19 infection rate lower before he reopens schools and businesses.

He tweeted, "New York on PAUSE will be extended in coordination with other states to May 15. Non-essential workers must continue to stay home. Social distancing rules remain in place. We must STAY THE COURSE."

All "New York State on PAUSE" restrictions and closures are now extended an additional one month. This action, Cuomo said, is taken in consultation with other regional states. He has been working with New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf, Delaware Gov. John Carney, Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo and Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker.

The respective governors will reevaluate closures as this new period draws to a close.

"Unpausing New York and reopening our economy is going to be an ongoing process over the coming weeks that we're working through with other states, but we have to do it in a way that doesn't drive up the infection rate and create a second wave of the virus," Cuomo said. "We have shown that we can control the spread of the virus, but we can't now undo all the progress we've made."

"As we continue to work on a regional plan to get people back to work and get businesses back up and running in a safe and responsible way, we are extending all 'New York State on PAUSE' functions until May 15 in coordination with other states in our multistate council because, although we can control the beast, we need to get that infection rate down even more, and we are not there yet."

In her community update Wednesday on LCTV, Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysch reminded people, "The message has not changed: We need to continue to follow all of those guidelines that we've been hearing all along (in



Gov. Andrew Cuomo delivers his daily press briefing on COVID-19 Thursday in the Red Room of the Capitol. (Photo by Darren McGee/Office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo)

*"We've made many sacrifices over these last several weeks, whether it's your work situation, not seeing your family, having all of those businesses closed that we enjoy going to. We've made all those sacrifices; don't let that be a waste."*

Niagara County  
Legislature Chairwoman  
Becky Wydysch

terms of physical distancing and personal hygiene).

"We've made many sacrifices over these last several weeks, whether it's your work situation, not seeing your family, having all of those businesses closed that we enjoy going to. We've made all those sacrifices; don't let that be a waste," she said. "Keep following those guidelines. Know that what we're doing is working. But we have to keep continuing that process to see that steady (hospitalization curve) flattening, and to stay in a good situation that won't overwhelm our health care system."

"Very important to stay home and do your part, as you have been."

Earlier in the week, Cuomo said, "Everybody's anxious to reopen. ... People need to get back to work. ... The worst sce-

nario would be if we did all of this, we got that number down, everybody went to extraordinary means, and then we go to reopen and we reopen too fast; or we reopen and there's unanticipated consequences and we see that number go up again."

### Face Masks

On Wednesday afternoon, Cuomo announced he would issue an executive order requiring all people in New York to wear a mask or a face covering when out in public and in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained, such as on public transportation. The executive order was signed later in the evening, and will go into effect at 8 p.m. Friday, April 17.

He said, "As relatively simple and possibly annoying as it seems, wearing a mask is one of the best things that we can do."

On Thursday, Cuomo directed all New Yorkers to wear masks or face coverings on public transportation systems and while taking private transportation, or riding in for-hire vehicles. Additionally, all operators of public systems, private carriers and for-hire vehicles must wear a mask or face covering at all times while working.

"Ultimately what determines the rate of infection? You do. And I do," Cuomo said. "That's what this all comes down to. As simple as it sounds. It's not about government; it's not about anything else. It's about what people decide to do, and what people have

SEE ELECTED, continued on Page 4

## Stapleton: Niagara County '2-3 weeks behind downstate' plateau



Niagara County Public Health Director Daniel Stapleton speaks with Legislator Chairwoman Becky Wydysch as part of an appearance on LCTV.

BY JOSHUA MALONI  
GM/Managing Editor

Downstate New York continues to see a plateau in the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations, and less coronavirus-related deaths each day.

Niagara County isn't quite moving that fast.

So said Public Health Director Daniel Stapleton while appearing Monday afternoon on Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysch's LCTV update.

"I think we're basically about two to three weeks behind downstate," he said. "When the governor says the numbers for them are plateauing, that's not true here. The numbers continue to increase. And we believe that our surge is on right now. Our numbers are increasing dramatically. But we also feel we're not at the peak yet."

"We hope that we reach the peak at a point where the hospitals are not overwhelmed in Niagara County. We don't want the surge of patients – the apex, if you will – to negatively impact the hospitals in terms of their functioning of their hospital."

"So, I think we're a little bit behind. The key is, people need to make sure they're following the social distancing guidelines. They need to stay home; they need to only go out for the most essential things they have – and that's food. They shouldn't be going out for any other reason. They need to make sure that they're staying home, self-isolating."

"My concern is that, if people

don't continue to stay home – they don't self-isolate, they don't wash their hands, because they think it's over – that the virus is going to continue to increase in this area, and will overwhelm the hospital, the local health department, the health care system. People need to follow through with this."

"If we let our guard down now, the virus can come on even stronger in a second wave. And we want to make sure that the people who are not weakened from the first wave aren't put in dire straits if a second wave comes."

"We're still at the point where we haven't reached our peak yet here. I hope we're getting close to that. I think we really have had the ability to flatten the curve. We're doing as much testing as we possibly can. The testing has increased ... and will continue to increase. But it's important that people know that they need to make sure they're following this social distancing; they're doing the things that they need to do."

"When you look at the information we have, 925 tests have been performed in Niagara County. We need to get much, much higher – two or three times that – before we can adequately say, 'Yes, the worst is over.'"

Stapleton again reiterated, "Testing has been a challenge for us right from the very beginning, and continues to be a challenge. If people remember, I ordered 1,500 testing kits about six weeks ago. I received 100 of those testing kits. SEE PHYSICAL, continued on Page 4

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