

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health

March 6, 2020

11a.m.

Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Good morning and welcome everyone. I would like to start by thanking the media here today for your continued efforts in helping us share the latest facts on COVID-19 as the situation evolves.
- Thank you also Mayor Tory, Councillor Cressy, and our colleagues from Toronto Paramedic Services and Toronto Fire Services for joining me here to share an update on our COVID-19 response activities underway in Toronto. Chief Matt Pegg is here in his role in overseeing the Office of Emergency Management and he is actively engaged in our local COVID-19 planning efforts.
- Globally, more countries are reporting cases of COVID-19. Here in Toronto, we are actively monitoring 11 positive cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. These people are currently at home in self-isolation. To date, we have had 14 cases of COVID-19 in our city. Three of these people have recovered from this illness.
- Late last night we learned that two Toronto residents were confirmed positive for the COVID-19 virus.
- One of these individuals is a man in his 50s who travelled from Iran and arrived in Toronto on February 27. He presented to North York General's emergency department on March 3. He was assessed and is at home in self-isolation.
- The second resident is a man in his 40s who travelled from Las Vegas and arrived in Toronto on February 28. He presented to Toronto Western's emergency department on March 4 and is at home self-isolating.

- We understand that all hospital protocols were followed for both of these cases. My staff have been following up directly with these individuals and all known close contacts of these individuals to understand the full details of their individual situations and those that they may have come into contact with.
- Through our contract tracing, our understanding is that the man in his 40s had symptoms from March 2 to March 4 and used public transit daily to commute to and from work during this time. I have spoken with our colleagues at the Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario to discuss the details of this case.
- The individual's transit routes from March 2 to March 4 for his daily commute included:
 - From Bathurst TTC Station westbound to Islington Station around 8:50 a.m.
 - From Islington TTC Station to his workplace using the 108N Mississauga Way Express Bus around 9:10 a.m.
- From March 2 to March 4 travelling home from the workplace, his daily commute included:
 - The 27 Milton GO Bus from the workplace to Yorkdale TTC Station around 6:10 p.m.
 - From Yorkdale TTC Station to St. George TTC Station around 6:45 p.m.
 - From St. George TTC Station westbound to Bathurst TTC Station around 7:16 p.m.
 - From Bathurst TTC Station northbound on the 7 Bathurst TTC Bus around 7:20 p.m.
- On March 4 the individual travelled on the 511 Bathurst Streetcar around 7:20 p.m. southbound and again around 10:15 p.m. northbound. He then travelled on the 7 Bathurst TTC Bus around 10:20 p.m.
- The TTC is considered a low-risk exposure setting, however we are sharing this information with the public in an abundance of caution.

- Currently, there is no evidence of local transmission of COVID-19 in Toronto.
- This is our local update. Looking nationally and globally, because we are seeing more cases internationally and in B.C., we anticipate and are prepared for local transmission.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is now advising that people with a recent history of travel in Iran should self-isolate for a period of 14 days after their last day in Iran. This is similar to the advice being given to individuals who have travelled to Hubei Province, China. Toronto residents who have travelled in these areas are asked to call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 within 24 hours of when they arrive in Toronto to receive support and further instructions.
- My advice to the general public, including those who use public transit is:
 - 1: If you have no symptoms of respiratory illness, and do not receive a call from us or another public health department, then you do not need to seek healthcare.
 - 2: If you are sick with respiratory symptoms for which you would not normally seek care --- but can manage your symptoms at home, with rest -- - stay home, practice good general infection prevention and control advice that we give during cold and flu season:
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze — ideally with a tissue. Or alternatively your elbow or sleeve.
 - 3: If you do develop symptoms of respiratory illness and you would normally seek healthcare, call ahead to your healthcare provider to let them know about your symptoms.
- As I have stated, we learned these case details late last night. My staff have been following up directly with individuals and their close contacts and we continue to do this. I will share more information as facts are confirmed.

- Since we learned of COVID-19, I have been impressed with how our community has been responding by increasing good infection, prevention and control activities such as hand washing and staying informed with credible information sources, and I am asking for you to continue taking this very responsible approach.
- At Toronto Public Health my team is carefully monitoring this situation and have continued to work each and every day on this matter since we first learned of COVID-19. We are also expanding our public health operations as our local situation changes.
- We are actively working with the TTC and Metrolinx to confirm details and manage related actions as needed.
- We are also actively working with our City and health partners to plan for the potential of local spread. The Office of Emergency Management is actively engaged, our Pandemic Working Group has been convened, and all frontline City divisions and agencies are refining their plans to further prepare. We continue to carefully monitor this matter.
- Given that this situation has impacted businesses globally, and also has the potential to further impact our economic climate, we have developed guidance that is being posted on our website today and we will continue to work with the local business community and share advice.
- As March break approaches and there are many events that will soon be taking place in our community that may also involve travel, we recommend reviewing the Public Health Agency of Canada's travel notices.
- When planning events, you may consider things like:
 - Are people attending the event coming from regions where there is community transmission of COVID-19? Or
 - Are people attending the event from demographic groups at greater potential health risk of severe disease, such as older adults?
 - Please visit our recently updated website for more details on this.

- For large gatherings, event organizers should facilitate good handwashing hygiene, advise people to stay home if they are sick, and consider other measures such as offering virtual, or live-streamed activities, instead of face-to-face meetings.
- I have also been asked what actions schools can take to prepare themselves if our local situation changes. There are recommendations based on the current COVID-19 situation for school administrators for the Kindergarten to Grade 12 population, which were recently released and are available on our website.
- Finally, I have also been asked what actions people can take to prepare themselves if our local situation changes. I think it is helpful to consider the supplies you may need at home if you were to become unwell with any illness, not just COVID-19.
- For families, this may mean considering your household needs and how you may address them if someone in your household becomes unwell. Things that people may consider include having supplies on-hand, so you do not need to leave home if you become ill, or how to plan childcare needs.
- It is understandable when there are uncertainties that people get concerned, that people may worry, but I am here again today to reassure you that based on the lessons we learned from SARS now 17 years ago, and given our experiences during the flu pandemic of 2009 and more recently, with Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome or MERS, we have learned, we have shared knowledge and we have built a stronger public health system that is ready to respond, as needed.
- However, I also want to assure you that the City is well-co-ordinated to respond. I encourage people to go about their regular lives, but stay informed. For me and my family, we will continue to go about our regular routines and activities, and to also stay informed. This means continuing to use public transit for our daily commuting.



Public Health

- We continue to update our website [Toronto.ca/coronavirus](https://toronto.ca/coronavirus) regularly as new facts are confirmed. Residents can also call our hotline 416-338-7600, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. to ask questions.
- I will now turn it over to Mayor Tory.