

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**April 20, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.**  
**Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- As of 12:30 p.m. today there are 3,682 cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. This includes 3,343 confirmed cases and 339 probable ones. There are 262 cases hospitalized, and there are 99 in intensive care units. I'm sad to report that we continue to see deaths in our community. In total 181 people have died of COVID-19 in Toronto. We offer our sincerest condolences to everyone who has lost their loved ones or friends to COVID-19.
- My team continues to work very hard to provide more timely and detailed COVID-19 data to the public. Data are at the core of the COVID-19 response in Toronto. This information helps us understand what is happening in our city and informs our actions to reduce virus spread and prevent deaths. It also helps us to see whether public health measures like physical distancing are working and when and if we need to change our approach.
- Last week, I committed to providing you with an update on our local COVID-19 data story. There are three parts of the story: the number of people currently infected with this virus; the simultaneous COVID-19 outbreaks in our city and where our story goes next.
- The first part of our story is the number of positive COVID-19 infections at any given time. This figure helps us understand and prepare for demands on our healthcare system. It also tells us if public health measures are working and when they might need adjusting.
- Given the recent provincial changes to testing guidelines particularly in our long-term care homes, we will see this number go up in the coming weeks as more people are tested. While this may be unsettling, it is not unexpected. More aggressive testing is critical, particularly in long-term care homes as it will help us to identify infections sooner and support our long-term care homes to implement stringent outbreak control measures faster.

- The second part of our data story is that there are two distinct outbreaks within our city – one in our broader community and the other in congregate settings, particularly in long-term care. These are distinct because they occur among two different populations with different risk factors for acquiring infection. We also see COVID-19 infections leading to different outcomes in these two settings.
- Looking at our data, we can see that local hospitalizations for COVID-19 have been driven by cases in our broader community. On the other hand, deaths in our community have been driven largely by the COVID-19 outbreaks we are experiencing in our long-term care homes.
- In addition, the actions we must take to protect people in these two settings are also different:
  - In our broader community, the data collected informs physical distancing measures and other public health actions.
  - In long-term care homes and other settings where people are in close proximity to each other, data informs specialized infection, prevention and control measures and more outbreak control measures such as the comprehensive long-term care action plan that was recently released by the province.
- To ensure that you continue to be informed, my team continues to post new data online about outbreaks in local long-term care homes and retirement homes. It will be updated every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- The final part of our data story relates to where we go next. This is informed by the use of data models to help us gain a better understanding of where we are on the curve of pandemic activity and where we might be going next. Our data modeling shows us that we are currently in the peak period for our reported cases.
- The COVID-19 case doubling rate, which captures the number of days for our case counts to double has slowed over the past two weeks. This tells that our pandemic activity is slowing down and this is good news.

- The province has increased testing capacity and will be testing more people, especially in long-term care settings. So we can expect to see more positive COVID-19 cases. While this is important for our understanding of how this virus is spreading and supporting better implementation of virus control measures, with this change in testing, it is difficult to project how many more cases we will be seeing.
- Another data point we continue to monitor to understand where we are on the COVID-19 curve is hospitalizations. There is good news here. We haven't seen the dramatic surges in hospitalizations that we originally feared and in fact the number of new hospitalizations each day has started to decrease.
- This information should be considered with cautious optimism. We are seeing our curve flattening because you are washing your hands, you are staying home, and you are keeping a safe distance from your friends, your families and other loved ones, as difficult as I know this is.
- I do need to stress that the only way we will continue to be successful is if we continue to keep these measures in place for more time, and for everyone to continue to do their part by staying at home.
- Another update I have been asked to provide is on the situation occurring at the Willowdale Welcome Centre. As of morning, there were approximately 74 positive cases of COVID-19 in this setting.
- In closing, I applaud the province for the stronger measures they have implemented to support vulnerable residents in congregate settings such as long-term care homes. We need to further strengthen these measures in long-term care homes, and I encourage the province to ensure that appropriate policies and resources are in place for these settings. This action will support optimal infection prevention and outbreak measures to ensure that these residents are getting the best care possible.

- Another congregate setting we need to consider is our shelters and respite centres. Earlier this year, our city recognized housing as a human right and a key determinant of our health. Everyone in our community deserves appropriate housing. In response to the COVID-19 emergency and through the collaborative efforts of many partners and community agencies, we have been able to transition many people out of congregate settings and establish them in more sustainable housing. This is a remarkable achievement. We must continue to build on this momentum to best protect the health of people in our city experiencing homelessness. This is not just for COVID-19, but it is also for the many other health negative impacts associated with homelessness and under-housing.
- All health, government, and community partners must continue to be united as we all have a valuable role in fighting this virus spread. Working together is the only way forward.
- We continue to learn new information about this virus each day. We need to be open to working outside our comfort zones, we must be nimble and armed with empathy to respond and adjust our actions as new facts are confirmed. When we are divided, the virus gets through the cracks between us. Please remember that the most important thing you can do right now is to continue to stay home, stay safe and take care of each other.

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