

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
May 7, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory. In today's update there are a total of 249 new COVID-19 infections, and to date, 4,364 people have recovered from this virus. My team updates our local data regularly with daily online updates. I encourage you to visit our website for more details.
- Earlier today, our Board of Health held its first ever virtual meeting and discussed:
 - Our local data and how it helps to inform our public health actions and COVID-19 response;
 - Critical work to support our most vulnerable communities and residents as the pandemic moves through our city;
 - How to move from COVID-19 response to COVID-19 recovery;
 - What we need to see in order to begin gradually easing our public health measures;
 - Why we will need to continue living with some of our public health measures until treatments or a vaccine are available; and
 - Why we must maintain our focus and diligence in fighting this silent health threat in our community to not risk losing all of our hard work and sacrifices.
- We also discussed the best path forward to strike the wisest balance between COVID-19 protective measures and meeting other health needs. This will rest on careful monitoring of our data so that we know when it is safe to gradually ease our public health measures and get back to enjoying the city we all love.
- During the meeting I shared that we are actively exploring ways to understand if COVID-19 is affecting certain groups in our community more so than others. As I shared earlier in the week, we know that emerging evidence from other jurisdictions suggests that COVID-19 is impacting some groups more than others, including certain ethno-racial groups and those with lower income levels.

- While the current provincial data system does not currently include socio-demographic and ethno-racial data, my team conducted a preliminary analysis of the data we have collected. My team's preliminary findings suggest that COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have been more commonly reported in areas of our city which have a higher proportion of low income earners and recent immigrants.
- Today's Board of Health meeting was productive and I am pleased to share that there was unanimous approval of a motion to support our COVID-19 response and recovery work. Through this motion, our Board of Health is requesting provincial and federal support to advance the City's important work on COVID-19 response and recovery, while continuing to address some of our most significant and most complex challenges — including housing affordability, access to social services, and how we use and share public space.
- I sincerely thank the Board of Health for all of their ongoing support so that we at Toronto Public Health can continue our work in protecting your health.
- Lastly, I would like to address some questions I have been asked regarding why our messaging to our public is changing. Our goal has always been to reduce virus spread, prevent deaths and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our city.
- In the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak we asked everyone to stay home and to only go out for essential needs. However, as we look forward to the post peak period of this outbreak, we are increasingly in a position to adjust our advice and approach to fighting this virus. This means starting to relax some of our public health measures as long as physical distancing is maintained. To help illustrate this, for example, when someone has surgery at first they must rest and stay in bed as they recover. As time progresses and as their condition improves, they are asked to slowly and gradually return to their regular activities. This is the same approach we are taking here with COVID-19.



Public Health

- I want to thank everyone once again for your commitment to our public health measures and keeping our city safe during this pandemic. I know it has not been easy and you continue to make many personal sacrifices. We need to stay the course so that we don't undo all of your hard work and sacrifices. So please, continue to stay safe by practising physical distancing when you go outside, and please continue to take care of each other.

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