

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**June 1, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.**  
**Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you Mayor Tory and good afternoon. Today there are 164 new COVID-19 infections in Toronto. To date, 8,630 people have recovered, an increase of 184 since yesterday. As always, for more detailed data on the status of COVID-19 cases in our city, please visit our website.
- Earlier today the agenda was published for our next virtual Board of Health meeting that will be taking place on June 8. At this meeting I will be providing an update on our COVID-19 response. With the report for this agenda item now public, I thought that now would be a good time to share this information with you.
- Since January, my team and I have been responding to the COVID-19 outbreak here in our city.
- In the earlier phases of the pandemic, our focus was to prevent COVID-19 cases, protect our city's vulnerable residents and the capacity of our local health system to care for us and to save lives. We achieved this by implementing strict public health and physical distancing measures.
- While COVID-19 has drastically altered our lives and tragically we have lost too many of our friends, family members and other loved ones to this virus, as I have stated before, thus far we have averted what could have been much worse. If you hadn't done your part, we could have been experiencing tragedies similar to what we've seen in other parts of the world. But we are not out of the woods yet and we need to remain diligent and focused as we move forward.

## Public Health

- As we seek to re-build our local economy and restore the quality of life in our city, our recommended approach, which is in keeping with the Provincial framework, calls for the gradual re-introduction and re-start of activities and businesses.
- This will start with lower risk activities and allow for sufficient time between phases to monitor our data and to observe the effects of these changes on virus containment, on healthcare capacity and on public health capacity.
- The recommendations that I will be sharing with the Board of Health next Monday are focused on ways to improve our ongoing COVID-19 response, based on our experiences to date. A critical component of our work will continue to be case investigation and contact management and follow-up. Although these are actually two distinct areas of public health activity and are often described in the popular media as contact tracing, these aspects of our public health response are amongst the most important when it comes to containing the spread of COVID-19.
- Case investigation, which involves very thorough interviews with those diagnosed with COVID-19, is aimed at achieving two key objectives: first, to establish where the individual may have acquired their infection with COVID-19 and second, to determine where, when and with whom the individual was during their period of infectiousness.
- All of the information gathered from the individual is then used to implement appropriate COVID-19 prevention measures such as quarantine, early referrals for assessment and testing for close contacts, and the use of personal protective equipment or cloth masks, to name just a few examples.
- In addition, by gathering and analyzing data from our case investigation and contact management processes, we are able to understand how COVID-19 is spreading in our city and impacting residents. These data inform our strategy to protect your health and help us to determine when we need to adjust our actions. It tells us when we are in a position to safely ease our public health measures and continue to reopen businesses in our city.

- Next week I will also be sharing an update with our Board of Health on the ongoing opioid poisoning crisis which has been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. These dual public health crises are having significant impacts on people who use drugs in our community, their families, friends and loved ones.
- Other than drug policy, one of the best ways to protect people from overdose is providing for close proximity to others and not using alone. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures that were implemented to promote physical distancing, which was necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, have forced harm reduction and other services that people rely upon to significantly reduce their service offerings or their service hours. These are the subjects we will discuss further at the Board of Health meeting next week.
- Finally, today marks the start of Pride Month in our city. Typically this is a celebration of life with many gatherings and events. This year given our current circumstances, I encourage everyone to take part in the many virtual ways to celebrate and support each other.
- In closing, I would like to thank you for your continued commitment to our public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our city. I know that this gets more challenging as time goes on. But together we are protecting the capacity of our healthcare system to care for those who are sick, so we can avoid the tragedies we are seeing in other jurisdictions. This is how we can all best get back to enjoying our city. So please, continue to practise physical distancing, and please continue to take care of each other.

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