

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
September 25, 2020 at 4 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon everyone. There are three significant developments to discuss today:
 - I will address the current case count for COVID-19 in the city.
 - An outbreak at Glen Park Public School.
 - And I will discuss decisive action that we at Toronto Public Health and the City of Toronto are taking to decrease COVID-19 spread in our city.
- Today I am reporting 236 new COVID-19 infections. The new count brings our total COVID-19 cases to 18,363. A total of 41 people are hospitalized and 15,725 people have recovered from the virus.
- An increase day over day of this scale is a warning to the entire city. Wherever you live, wherever daily life takes you, you must take the steps for self-protection that we advise you to take:
 - Watch your distance, keeping at least six feet apart whenever you can from anyone you don't live with.
 - Wear a mask, again as much as you can and certainly when you are in situations where you can't keep at least six feet distance from anyone you don't live with.
 - And wash your hands often.
- These three actions, done together, will reduce the risk of COVID-19. And if you're not being disciplined about them, I ask you to please start.
- As well, Toronto Public Health has declared an outbreak at Glen Park Public School. This is the first declared COVID-19 outbreak in a Toronto school.
- But first, some important context. The word outbreak may sound ominous to you, but this is what it means in the case of COVID-19 in schools. This definition is set by the province so that an outbreak is defined consistently at all schools in the province.

- It means at least two confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a 14 day period and with a link to a school setting.
- This definition supports a swift response that will help manage the spread of COVID-19 aggressively. In this instance, two students have been confirmed as positive for COVID-19. This meets the standard for the provincial definition of an outbreak.
- The established protocols to manage the situation and limit risk are being followed. The two students infected have been isolated to recover from their illness.
- One teacher and two class cohorts - one of 17 students and another of 18 students – have been sent home to self-isolate and will remain at home for fourteen days.
- Parents in the school community have been notified in writing.
- At the school, all infection prevention and control measures continue to be followed strictly. This includes masking requirements for students and staff and enhanced cleaning measures. Again, all steps have been followed as expected in a situation of this nature.
- One of the realities of living in a world with COVID-19 is that there will be cases in schools. Today's news is expected. I expect there will be similar announcements in future and you can be confident the steps developed to manage the situation and reduce the risk of spread will be followed.
- Now to the subject of actions we are taking under my authority as your Medical Officer of Health.
- During the next few hours, orders under the Health Protection and Promotion Act will be served to four businesses in the City, ordering their closure until such time as they satisfy the conditions spelled out in the orders. These are specific actions to arrest transmission of COVID-19.

- These businesses are hospitality focused. And the reasons for the orders are distinct to each business.
- Because the orders are presently being served I can't speak to specific circumstances until service is complete, but I can tell you broadly there were several concerning factors that led me to take this action.
- First, we found a concerning link involving these locations. Our investigation found that many people are connected to more than one of the four businesses. Our investigation also found evidence that in some instances people infected with COVID-19 were employed at more than one of the four locations.
- In another instance, one of the businesses served food buffet style, which is clearly prohibited under existing provincial regulations to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- Second, the operators of these businesses were frequently uncooperative with our investigators to the extent that our investigation efforts were significantly impeded.
- In some instances we identified situations where staff were working while ill. We also became aware of concerns that staff were being pressured to work while ill.
- These factors combined to create a significant risk to efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 and so I am acting under my authority to close down these businesses.
- These are not actions I take lightly, but I act first in the interests of public health based on the data and the facts of the matter.
- In these circumstances the action taken is the right action to protect your health. The names of the affected businesses and their locations will be released to media once the process of serving the orders is completed.

- We look forward to the resolution of these matters and hope that the businesses involved will comply with all the actions required to lift the orders and allow them to return to operation in a safe manner that sustains public health.
- I also want to stress that our investigations for the most part are characterized by co-operation. Some of the businesses we've dealt with have gone above and beyond, for example closing voluntarily for deep cleaning or to adjust operating procedures.
- Others have implemented measures to protect staff, customers and broader public health. For example some have reorganized staffing requirements to keep employees fixed at one location in response to COVID-19.
- I commend the businesses that are acting in ways to protect our city's health by balancing the operation of their business with the interests of the people of Toronto. They are an example to our local business community. Tough times demand tough choices, and these businesses are stepping up.
- With this weekend just ahead of us, I ask that you too step up, by watching your distance, wearing your mask, and as always, taking care of each other.

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