

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
September 16, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon everyone. Today I am reporting 86 new COVID-19 infections. This brings our total COVID-19 case count to 17,028.
- A total of 15,089 people have recovered from the virus. There are currently 20 people hospitalized due to COVID-19 infections and 7 people are in ICU. As of 10:30 a.m. this morning, there were 6 cases among staff at local schools.
- Two things are happening in Toronto: we are getting used to living life under re-opening and we know we are entering resurgence because of the increase in the COVID-19 case numbers. Our reproductive number is 1.2 - that means that each new case of COVID-19 infection is creating 1.2 further cases. That's why we want to see that reproductive number below 1.
- And this is done in large part by the steps for self-protection we always reinforce: watching your distance, wearing your mask and washing your hands.
- Re-opening let us do many of the things that were shut down last spring. Resurgence means we cannot act like we're back to normal. We're not. We want one, but not the other. And the way to do this is to use the steps for self-protection that will reduce virus spread.
- If you do these things we can affect the direction of COVID-19 infections. If the direction doesn't change there is a real chance new restrictions will have to be imposed. We know this because we've seen this in other countries from around the world.
- We're now 6 weeks into reopening in Toronto and a picture is emerging of infections in our city. In these last 6 weeks, approximately 50% of COVID-19 infections are categorized as close contact, meaning as a result of exposure to

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someone whose infection is known - although it may not have been evident when they infected someone else.

- Close contact can happen anywhere: with family, at social events, at work – especially anywhere that masks aren't being worn and physical distancing isn't happening.
- About 20% of cases are from community transmission - meaning that we aren't able to be certain about the exact source of their infection.
- In the big picture, here are the places where transmission is happening:
 - Socializing indoors;
 - Big events, with crowds, where people forget about taking steps to protect themselves; and as well
 - Bars and restaurants, especially amongst their staff.
- Our data tells us people are getting COVID-19 in part by socializing indoors, without wearing masks, while standing too close together and for too long.
- It's happening particularly at events where your guard is down. My team is currently investigating and tracking 4 separate weddings that have so far generated 22 infections. Remember, prior to their positive test, these 22 people would have been contagious, possibly without knowing it for a period of time.
- We're also seeing patterns emerge that point to infections from smaller gatherings. Everyday events like play dates and gatherings of extended family. As I said Monday, you cannot tell if somebody has COVID-19 just by looking at them, and just because they're family or friends or people you know well from work doesn't mean they can't infect you.
- We're seeing an increase in cases at businesses like bars and restaurants. And interestingly, where workplaces are involved, we're seeing infections more often between staff and less so between staff and customers.

- One venue generated 6 confirmed cases: 4 in staff, 2 in patrons. Another generated 9 cases: 7 staff, 2 patrons. At a restaurant with 5 confirmed cases, they were comprised of 4 staff and 1 customer.
- Our investigators have also noted that people are coming to work with symptoms, and working during the time when they're infectious.
- I cannot stress enough that if you know you're sick, or you think you might be, the first thing to do is to deal with your symptoms and keep apart from others as much as possible.
- I know for many people that this is easier said than done. You need to work, to make a living. I encourage employers to support staff who are sick by making it clear you want them at work only when they're well and I encourage employers as well to manage your business to allow for sick time, if you can.
- I recognize that this is a big ask of you, in uncertain economic times, but the sooner we grapple with COVID-19 in the world around us, the sooner we have the world around us that we want.
- Please don't start thinking that this place is safe and that place isn't. You can be infected anywhere if you're not taking the right steps to protect yourself and to protect others.
- The key thing is what you do: watch your distance, wear your mask, wash your hands and also, weigh where you're going and whether you need to.
- If we all think about risk as we go about our daily lives and we act to address risks by taking the steps for self-protection, it will make change and prevent a lot of stress, cost and heartache.
- We've done this before. We did it last spring. We said, stay home. And everyone did, except all the brave people who had to go to work every day to supply the necessities of life in the city.
- We gave you advice and direction, you took it, and it worked. The curve flattened. The case counts went low.

- So please take on board what I'm saying now:
 - As much as possible, limit your contact with people who don't live with you.
 - Ask yourself: is where I'm going somewhere I **need** to go or somewhere I **want** to go? And if I only **want** to... can it wait? Is there a low contact way to do it?
 - Ask yourself: am I going to be in a group that I know is too big to be safe?
- And no matter where you go or what you do: watch your distance, wear your mask, and wash your hands when you're home again.
- We're in a transition period as we approach the fall and winter months. We're at a crossroads too. No one person will decide what happens next. It's what we do together and what happens as a result.

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Media contact: Lenore Bromley, Toronto Public Health, 416-338-7974,
Lenore.Bromley@toronto.ca