

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**November 10, 2020 at 4 p.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon. Earlier this afternoon, I learned that the latest COVID-19 percent positivity figure for Toronto is 5.9%. This means out of all the Toronto residents who tested for COVID-19 between November 1<sup>st</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>, just shy of 6% tested positive.
- The spread of COVID-19 has never been greater in Toronto. In recent days we've seen the confirmed case counts rising to an alarming extent.
- Today, we reported 533 new cases of COVID-19. Yesterday, we reported 504. The total for the past four days is close to 2,000 new COVID-19 infections in our city.
- The temporary restrictions that were imposed last month were meant to create barriers to contact between people in order to limit spread.
- We have seen some success.
- In late September, we had seen increased case counts downtown, in neighbourhoods where socializing was high and that are home to many bars and restaurants.
- In the Waterfront Communities and the Island neighbourhood, for the period from September 18<sup>th</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup>, the COVID-19 case rate was 275 per 100,000 people. The temporary restrictions began on October 10<sup>th</sup>, and for the 3 week period ending November 8<sup>th</sup>, the case rate had dropped to 49 per 100,000 people.
- In Little Portugal, a similar downtown neighbourhood, with a relatively young population and many bars and restaurants, the COVID-19 case rate for the three weeks ending October 10<sup>th</sup> was 604 per 100,000 people and by November 8<sup>th</sup>, it was 77 cases per 100,000 people.

- We don't want to surrender what we've gained from implementing these measures. For most of this time period, case counts remained stubbornly in the low to mid 300 cases per day.
- In recent days we've seen local COVID-19 cases rise to more than 400 cases per day and, twice, above 500 cases per day.
- Admissions to hospital are rising slowly, but steadily. The trend is upward. The grave risk we currently face is evident. More action is required to protect the people of Toronto from the rampant spread of COVID-19.
- Given the circumstances I have described, as your Medical Officer of Health, I am using my authority to issue Section 22 orders under the Health Protection and Promotion Act to extend certain actions that are necessary given what the city is facing.
- This will sustain the following requirements for a 28 day period when the province moves us into its new framework on November 14<sup>th</sup>:
  - Indoor dining will remain prohibited at restaurants, bars and food or drink establishments;
  - Meeting and event spaces will remain closed, as will casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments; and
  - The prohibition on indoor group fitness and exercise classes will continue.
- In addition, I am making the following strong recommendations to you:
  - That all social gatherings be restricted to only household members, and 1-2 essential supports; and
  - That you restrict your close contact to those you live with and your essential supports.
- This means limiting in-person activities outside the home to essential activities only: going to work or school, health care, shopping for your household and health needs, and exercise and physical activity.

## Public Health

- At businesses and workplaces, I am strongly recommending that they implement work from home policies wherever this is possible, review their heating and ventilation systems to ensure that they are in good working order and appoint a compliance officer to ensure implementation of occupational health and safety and infection prevention and control measures.
- My expectation is that these measures and recommendations can interrupt the transmission of COVID-19. But what these measures and recommendations need is you. It takes you to do these things to make it harder for COVID-19 to spread.
- I recognize that these actions will have economic impacts and I am truly sorry for this. I truly am. However, in my professional opinion, the greatest harm would be to allow COVID-19 to spread at this rate. It's logical to assume that it will only get worse. It's logical to believe that if we effectively reduce the spread, that the economy will benefit in the long run.
- If action is not taken we can expect to see even more cases of COVID-19, which means more illness and more death. These infections could easily spread further through the health care system, to the long-term care system, to schools and to workplaces.
- To everyone in Toronto, I want to warn you in the plainest possible terms that COVID-19 is out there at levels we have not seen before. You should assume it is everywhere and that without proper precautions and protections, you are at risk of infection. We can't guarantee what the course of illness looks like. We can't predict what the long-term effects might be. People recover from it who you wouldn't expect to live through it. And people you'd think would come through it can die instead.
- I urge you to limit your contact with people outside your home setting, as much as you can. Be strict about keeping at least six feet apart from people you don't live with, as much as you can. Be strict about wearing your mask and washing your hands. These actions will protect you.



## Public Health

- In good conscience, we cannot, we simply cannot, stand by and allow COVID-19 to disrupt Toronto without resistance.
- COVID-19 has the advantage right now because it's spreading from person-to-person, from people spending too much time together, too close, and for too long. The virus only needs that opportunity. For the next few weeks, I urge you not to give it that opportunity.

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