

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**December 23, 2020 at 10 a.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good morning.
- As the Mayor just stated, measures have been in place since the Province moved us into our current status, and these will be enhanced across the province on Boxing Day.
- Many people are asking: is this going to work? And has it worked so far?
- That's a fair question, given the nature of the case counts.
- So to that, I'd say this – which I have said before – it's hard to prove what didn't happen, as a result of the measures that have been implemented.
- I am confident the measures have limited the resurgence of COVID-19 because if you look at other places that opted for more limited responses, you see the result reflected in the spread of the disease.
- I think there is merit to the province-wide approach because if we can reduce the amount of contact people are having with one another, it follows that COVID-19 will find it harder to spread.
- The virus needs us to give it the means to keep spreading.
- COVID-19 has infiltrated every aspect of life. No one component of a plan is going to solve this problem.
- Bringing COVID-19 under control will be the result of multiple solutions, and this includes the choices that each of us makes where we can in our daily lives.

## Public Health

- On this, my last report before the holidays, I am reporting 628 new cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. There are 321 people in hospital and 85 people are in the ICU.
- And sadly we have received reports of another 17 deaths.
- The end of life is one of life's few guarantees – but in so many instances over the course of this past year I have found myself wondering: how many of those lives lost might not have been lost this year, if COVID-19 hadn't come along and spread as it did?
- On Monday, we spoke of a 30 year old in Toronto who died because of COVID-19 and of an 11 year old fighting COVID-19 in hospital. I feel for these two families and the many others who have also suffered.
- Their suffering is a reminder to all of us that COVID-19 is, above all, unpredictable and that when it behaves unexpectedly it can do so with terrible consequences.
- While medicine knows what is likely with a COVID-19 infection, there are no guarantees.
- I'm thinking as well of the heroic people working in Toronto's hospitals, as the case counts rise. To go into work in hospital or in another healthcare setting these days involves no small amount of courage.
- For all its rewards, healthcare can also be very draining for its practitioners.
- The reality they face this year is even more so.
- But I know they aren't giving up on any of us – and we can't give up on them.
- We must be on their side and show it by keeping apart – to do what we can, so as not to make this bad situation worse.
- By this point, we know well what that means.

- Staying home when you can, keeping as much distance when you can't, masking up when you're out and, in the next few days, making the toughest choice of all.
- The actions that offer the most protection this Christmas will be the hardest to take. Traditions at this time of year may as well be part of our DNA.
- So to say that we'll stay apart this year is easier said than done. It is understandable, under these circumstances, to want to do what you always do.
- It is natural to want to rebel in some way against all the obstacles we face.
- But this is just one year of the unusual and next year I believe that we can expect better things, and hopefully with a new appreciation and a better understanding of all things.
- So with that, and behalf of Chief Pegg and behalf of the team at Toronto Public Health, I wish you all a happy holidays. I ask that you please stay home, stay safe, and take care of each other.

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