

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**December 16, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon. I am reporting 850 new cases of COVID-19 today. This, again, a record high of new reported cases. There are currently 281 people in Toronto who are in hospital with COVID-19 and 68 are in the ICU. Sadly, 19 people have died.
- Today, the youngest person amongst those sick enough to be in hospital is 23 years old. In the last day, a 47-year old is the youngest amongst those reported to have died from COVID-19.
- With today's cases, Toronto is now past 50,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.
- The risk of even more, widespread illness is real and rising.
- Let me show you a visual.
- The blue part of the graph shows the rise in cases from the start of the pandemic in Toronto to the point we reached 25,000 confirmed cases.
- The pandemic started last winter.
- It took us from January 25<sup>th</sup> until October 20<sup>th</sup> to reach 25,000 cases.
- But it took just shy of 8 weeks to double the number of cases again in Toronto – to more than 50,000, shown in red. That's the reality of where we are today.
- I am sorry to say how clearly it speaks for itself.
- But this is only part of the story. When we talk about cases it's important to remember the cases we report only reflect the tip of the iceberg – the number of 'true' infections is much larger than the cases we report.

- We report on cases in people who tested positive.
- What we don't capture are infections that aren't symptomatic, or are so mildly symptomatic that people don't think they have COVID and don't get tested.
- Those people are able to spread infection and never know it, possibly spreading it to someone who won't be as lucky to experience mild disease.
- Turning to the next slide.
- This slide shows how much time people spent at home between January and early December of this year based on anonymized cellular data. More importantly, it shows that staying apart works: last spring we were able to flatten the curve.
- Today we know people aren't staying at home as much as they did back in the spring, thus creating more opportunities for virus spread.
- Our call to action has never been clearer.
- I cannot urge you strongly enough to keep apart during the holidays.
- Many of us celebrate with one side of the family one year and the other the next.
- Many of us have family and friends across the country and around the world.
- When you think about it, we have been connecting with each other by phone and by computer for decades now.
- The connection is real – in spite of the distance.
- So keeping apart actually isn't that unusual for us at the holidays... it's just that this year we have to keep apart more than usual.

- This year it's not distance that lies between us, but COVID-19.
- I know it seems hard to imagine it's necessary but many risks are converging in the holidays this year.
- The risk of infection.
- The risk that infections could turn serious, or deadly.
- The risk that infections rise so significantly that the health care system is swamped, or worse, overwhelmed.
- Given where we are now, all these things are very real possibilities.
- Which points to the greatest risk: our ability to deny what we don't want to deal with.
- As a doctor I've seen this too many times... leading to outcomes that could have been prevented if only we'd acted sooner.
- I will say it until the last minute: the holidays in 2020 pose a real threat and demand difficult decisions from all of us.
- COVID-19 can make things much, much worse in Toronto if we make it easy.
- This holiday, from now into the new year, it is vital that we all find a way to connect but commit to staying apart.
- I know many of you are acting to protect yourselves and the people who matter to you this holiday season.
- In the coming days, I'm asking all of you who are doing differently over the holidays to lead by example and to speak up.
- Directly encourage the people you know and care about to commit to the same thing – keeping apart for the good of everyone.

- The more voices there are taking a stand, the more impact our resolve will have.

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