

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**December 30, 2020 at 10 a.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good morning. Today, I am reporting 1,069 new cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. More than half are between the ages of 20 and 49. 345 people are in hospital.
- We've seen a 55% increase in the 7-day moving average for hospitalizations since November 8. 92 people are in the ICU.
- And sadly, 4 people have died.
- Today's case count figure is a record high for the second day in a row.
- Today is the fourth record high this month – following 957 cases yesterday and earlier record highs announced on December 16<sup>th</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Toronto's case count since the start of the pandemic now exceeds 60,000.
- The level of infection is such that every neighbourhood in Toronto meets the province's criteria for red zone designation.
- In the most recent data, from December 14<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21% of respondents to our online case survey reported gathering in a private home and with people who weren't members of their household.
- Our fear is that these results, in fact, underestimate the degree to which people were mixing over the holidays.
- I last reported to you in person on December 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- There have been 4,252 cases in the seven days since.



## Public Health

- While it is now five days since Christmas Day, I am not convinced that these cases are connected to it.
- Cases are generally confirmed many days after infection – we estimate usually between one to two weeks following.
- In this context, I have three key points to make.
- First, it is now reasonable that we should brace for an extended period of potentially unsettling and discouraging numbers in terms of COVID-19 infections in Toronto.
- Second, early next week Toronto Public Health will announce additional actions meant to reduce risk associated with COVID-19 in workplaces.
- These steps by Toronto Public Health are meant to create as much distance and safety as possible – while respecting many people need to work and many businesses are rightly permitted to continue operations in order to provide the goods and services we all need in daily life.
- Thirdly, for all of us, we have no choice but to resolve to keep apart as much as possible to limit further spread at these levels – or at any level.
- It is possible, but it requires resolve, patience and belief.
- We can make the virus level decline.
- Right now, that may seem hard to believe.
- The news during the holidays has focused on two stories: vaccines, and the variants of the COVID-19 virus that have emerged elsewhere in the world and are now being identified in many countries, including ours.
- Viruses are always changing.

- While we take nothing for granted, the scientific and medical communities anticipate changes in the structure of a virus and its ability to spread.
- Science also has important insights into COVID-19.
- The indications are that the vaccines as developed will remain effective against the virus – or that if it somehow becomes necessary to adapt the vaccines, that can be done.
- Now is the time to focus on steps for our own self-protection – and the protection of others – because the risks around us are escalating.
- The next several months cannot be seen as just the stretch of time between vaccine trial results and needles in arms, or a period just to be waited out until it's our turn for the shot.
- We must be active, we must be vigilant, determined and patient while we wait our turn.
- I urge you to double down on keeping apart, keeping a safe distance and wearing your mask every time you can.
- Most critically: Go only where you need to.
- This has two benefits:
  - First, it keeps you apart. When you are apart, you face the least amount of risk.
  - Second, it protects others, because there are always people who have no choice – they have to be out.
- But when you can stay home, do.
- The fewer people we have mixing at this point is perhaps the most important defense against COVID-19 that is under our control.



## Public Health

- We will need to believe we can change things and act like it in the next few weeks, particularly if we have to get through a period of discouraging case counts.
- We should prepare for those numbers.
- We should act to make certain that they will come down.
- It is our only choice and it is never too late to make it.
- In all of us lies the capacity to begin turning these numbers around.
- It isn't impossible – and it won't be easy.
- We need to be clear on that as we enter the new year.
- However, it can be done and we can do it.
- It isn't a question of if.
- We can.
- But we have to earn this one.
- I wish all of you good things in 2021.
- Please be active, vigilant, determined and patient and let us unite to put COVID-19 behind us.

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