

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
December 21, 2020 at 3 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Difficult circumstances require difficult measures. What is being asked of all us is necessary, today and in the days and weeks ahead.
- I urge everyone to act immediately to protect yourselves against COVID-19.
- We cannot wish away COVID-19.
- We cannot ignore it.
- We cannot pretend or hope that somehow we'll be safe while it infects somebody else.
- COVID-19 is surging dangerously – here and all over the world. It will only get worse without action.
- Today I am reporting 646 new cases of COVID-19 in Toronto. 300 people are in hospital and 86 people are in the ICU. Sadly, I am also reporting 9 deaths.
- Amongst these reports, the youngest of those who've died was 30 years old, and the youngest person in hospital is 11 years old.
- In the last 7 days, we have reported just over 5,050 cases of COVID-19 in Toronto, bringing us to just over 54,000 cases since the pandemic began.
- There's a lot of concern today about the new strain of virus that is thought to be prevalent in the United Kingdom.
- It's a risk worth managing carefully, and as we've seen in the response this includes acting with caution and pre-emptively.

- Given where we are in the pandemic, this is a logical course of action.
- For those feeling anxious about the situation, I would urge you to remember that viruses are constantly evolving and that there is much yet to be understood about this on a scientific basis.
- Mostly, my advice is not to let it discourage you, but to use it instead to strengthen your resolve.
- Whatever science may determine this development represents, it is a reminder that COVID-19 spreads really, really easily and we ignore that at our peril.
- I don't think any of us would be around someone we knew to have COVID-19 if we had the choice.
- So this suggests people are getting it, in some instances, from people who don't know that they have it.
- COVID-19 is a true opportunist. Given the right circumstances, it infects people easily.
- Identifying the right circumstances is simple: when we're together, especially indoors, too physically close, for too long, around someone who may or may not know that they're infected
- When our guard is down. When we're relaxed. When we're with people we're used to.
- Those who can keep apart must.
- While there will be some people who have to have contact with others, I encourage everyone who is able to stay apart to do just that.

Public Health

- It's disappointing COVID-19 has worsened so dangerously during the holidays, but trouble doesn't care what day it is. It strikes when it strikes.
- COVID-19 has gathered steam.
- The best we can do is to cut it off.
- That requires us to keep apart at every opportunity.
- But being apart does not have to mean being completely alone.
- Use the means at your disposal – your computer, your phone – to reach out over the holidays. And when you connect, take credit for the choice to keep apart this year. You have every right to say to one another 'I wish we didn't have to do this, but I am glad we did.'
- In uniting against COVID-19 this one time we are paving the way both to the best of the past and toward the future as we know it should be.
- To have both, at present, we have to make the best of the situation as it is.
- Someone said to me the other day: if you love your family or your friends so much that you can't spend one Christmas without them, surely it means that you love them enough to spend this Christmas apart.

-30-

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