

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**January 6, 2021 at 2 p.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon. Today I am reporting 837 new cases of COVID-19. 406 people are in hospital. This is a high and worrying number. 89 people are in the ICU.
- Toronto Public Health is moving forward swiftly in its role on the teams established to support COVID-19 vaccinations for residents, staff and essential caregivers in the 87 long-term care homes in the city.
- In Toronto, long-term care homes are connected to nearby hospitals in a hub and spoke model of care and service.
- Those hospitals are providing invaluable hands-on presence in administering vaccines to those who need them most and soonest.
- As you've just heard from the Mayor, significant progress has been made in delivery of vaccinations at more than a third of the 87 facilities.
- Partners in health from all sectors and jurisdictions are working together in a reassuring level of co-operation and determination.
- I have full confidence we will meet the January 21<sup>st</sup> deadline.
- This is welcome news for everyone in Toronto: those living and working in the long-term care system and all of us who have watched with sadness the terrible toll COVID-19 has taken there.
- What is concerning for all of us in Toronto are the rising pressures on the city's hospitals.
- I speak regularly with my colleagues in the hospital sector and share their concern about the weeks ahead.

- First, I want to deliver a message that it is important for everyone in Toronto to understand.
- And it's this: if you need urgent medical care, call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital.
- I know many people have expressed unease at the idea of going to hospital, for fear of contracting COVID-19.
- The hospitals continue to provide emergency care and have significant programs in place for infection prevention and control to manage COVID-19.
- Trust your instincts.
- If they are telling you something is seriously wrong, something that requires immediate medical attention – don't delay.
- There has been too much suffering and too much loss of life because of COVID-19 – please do not allow fear to cause more.
- But if you are well, I ask you to please do everything you can to stay that way.
- As able as the health care system is, it is delivering care under enormous struggle as COVID-19 cases surge.
- And there is little reason to expect that case counts will decline anytime soon.
- In the 837 cases I reported to you today, people aged 20 to 29 were the age group with the highest number of cases at 181.
- Today the youngest person amongst those newly hospitalized is 23 years old.
- I understand from discussions with my hospital colleagues that admissions of younger people are reaching noticeable levels.

- Overall, 87% of ICU beds in Toronto are now occupied.
- 89% of acute care beds are now occupied.
- In the past month, we have seen a 14% increase in cases currently in hospital and a 57% increase since early November.
- Our data suggests that we will continue to see a climb in hospitalized cases.
- This is certainly the expectation in the health care system.
- And while the hospitals are providing the care they typically deliver under normal circumstances, they are also simultaneously delivering COVID-19-related care – in some instances managing outbreaks, supporting infection prevention and control programs in long-term care homes, and many are delivering vaccines on site and now in long-term care homes as well.
- While we are expecting so much of the health care system, there are concerning findings from Toronto Public Health's online Source of Infection survey that's given to cases of COVID-19.
- Most recently respondents indicated that during the period between December 22<sup>nd</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup>, almost 32% gathered in a home – either theirs or others' – with 10 or fewer people, as compared to 21% who indicated they had done so in the weeks prior.
- Also, the proportion who reported close contact with a non-household member increased to 44%, having been 30% previously.
- The outcome of those decisions will emerge over the next days and weeks.
- If they manifest as COVID-19 cases, the implications are plain to see.



## Public Health

- But the thing is, it is never too late to change. We must do all we can do as individuals to protect and maintain our own health, so the health care system can provide care as easily as possible to those who will need it urgently in the weeks ahead.

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