

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
January 11, 2021 at 2 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you, Mayor Tory, and good afternoon. Today I am reporting 978 new cases of COVID-19. 433 people are in hospital, and 115 people are in the ICU.
- I am sorry to have to tell you that we are reporting 14 deaths.
- This will end, but we're not there yet.
- At some point almost every doctor has to look their patient in the eye and deliver bad news.
- There is a lot of advice on how to talk to people in such circumstances – about the kinds of words to use and the kinds of words to avoid.
- A rule of thumb is not to say anything that might seem to shame or blame.
- At this point, we're past shame and blame.
- We have some hard truths to face.
- Our data shows us that, as we discussed at the last briefing, COVID-19 is now spreading at levels so serious that it is hard to describe.
- What we are seeing now is the consequence of too many people spending too much time together in December and in particular during the holidays.
- You may get COVID-19 and survive. Most people do.
- But you may spread it to someone who can't – and it is not fair someone should die from COVID-19 because the rest of us didn't try hard enough to avoid it.

- These are hard times for people.
- It is hard emotionally and it's hard mentally.
- It's hard when your school is a computer.
- It's hard to live with the limitations of lockdown and still see case counts going up.
- The measures are meant to help people keep apart, but they aren't magic – measures only work when people work within them.
- The case counts we're seeing show we're spending too much time together in the wrong environments and the virus leaps at the chance to spread when we do.
- Many people need to be out moving around – many people need to work in person, many people have to get to work, and many people simply cannot stay home.
- But every one of us with the luxury of making a choice – whether it's once a day or a hundred times – we need now to make the choice to stay home.
- I get the sense that part of people's frustration is the feeling that no matter what we do, COVID-19 is always able to outsmart us.
- I understand why people feel that way.
- It's hard to remember we have never been closer to that day where we have the upper hand and the virus doesn't.
- But the price we will pay if we just wait it out – I cannot believe that it is a price any of us in Toronto would want to pay.
- Since this started, 2,064 people have died.

- 71,078 people have been sickened, many of them terribly so.
- Yet compared to many places in the world, we've done comparatively well, even though we've paid a heavy price.
- We all know of other places that have paid one far heavier.
- We don't want to be one of them, but I am afraid we're at the point where we're at risk of losing the relative shelter we've enjoyed.
- To avoid making the risk worse we have got to get committed at the individual level.
- Here are the things you can do – they will sound familiar – you've hear me say them before.
- And I say them because they work.
- Stay home as absolutely much as you can, and don't spend time indoors with people you don't live with.
- If you can work from home, please do it.
- Get outside – one way to challenge the stress of the same four walls and the same familiar faces is to get out – but wear your mask and keep a distance from others as best you can.
- It isn't a big risk to pass a stranger on the street.
- It gets riskier to spend time too close to someone for too long because then it's easy to let your guard down.
- Only go out for the essentials: work that can't be done at home, groceries, pharmacies, medical care, exercise.
- Minimize the amount you're going out – if you can buy online, please do that.

- Plan ahead so that you are going to any stores only as often as need be.
- Try to go out when wherever you're going is less busy.
- If you can pick up things for someone when you go the store or when you order on line, do it – facilitating a distanced drop off is a contribution to keeping apart.
- I want to stop for a second here to thank all the employers who are trying so hard to create safe workplaces and safe conditions for their customers.
- I know it's easy to focus on people who aren't doing the hard work – but the vast majority of people I know are putting people first, trying their best to figure out how to make this work and keep people safe.
- I thank you for that and encourage you to keep making your expectations clear in terms of infection prevention and control measures, in terms of telling staff to stay home when they're sick and supporting them when they do and encouraging them to get tested.
- How we help one another is a big part of creating a sense of momentum as we live through this very difficult phase of the pandemic.
- So, please think about the people you know who are alone and check in on the phone or on the computer – they'll benefit from the contact and so will you.
- Good deeds work wonders – we're lucky to have so many ways to do them and still be able to keep the distance we must.
- This virus keeps spreading because we keep creating opportunities to let it. It's not inevitable that COVID-19 has to spread like this.
- I understand if you find it hard to believe you have the power to stop the spread – but you do.



- It just takes all of us, doing our best.
- We may not eliminate it – but we can make it better than this.
- We can turn this around and I guarantee you – every little thing that every one of us does is going to be far better than the situation we’re in today.

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