

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**February 24, 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 389 new cases of COVID-19. 30 people have been admitted to hospital, bringing the total to 351, and 63 people are in the ICU. Sadly, I am reporting 1 additional death.
- There are 72 confirmed variant of concern cases in Toronto:
  - 71 are the U.K. variant B.1.1.7.
  - 1 is the Brazilian variant.
- 710 cases have screened positive for mutations of interest and are expected to be confirmed as variants of concern.
- When I delivered that figure on Monday it was 511.
- So in two days, there have been 200 more screened positives, with the full expectation that within the coming days these will be laboratory confirmed as variants of concern.
- The only trend I am prepared to cite at this point is that the screened positive total marches upward daily – and that should be a matter of concern to all of us.
- I remind you again that as much as you can, stay home, keep your exposure to the people that you live with, wear a well-fitting mask in public, keep as much physical distance as you can from people you don't live with and wash your hands regularly.
- The variants are something to worry about – easily transmitted and in all likelihood capable of causing more severe illness – but they can be countered if we take the steps for self-protection we all know.

- I want to say when I am outside I continue to be struck by the number of people who are masked.
- And I thank these people, I thank them for the message that they are sending.
- This is especially important in light of the fact that just a few moments ago, the remarkable data team at Toronto Public Health just calculated the reproductive number for Toronto to be 1.1.
- This means that right now in Toronto, each new case of COVID-19 is giving rise to more than one new case of COVID-19 thereafter.
- It means that our epidemic is in a position where it is again growing.
- This is not where we want to be.
- We know now that we need this reproductive number to be below one, and in light of the variants of concern and the modelling that I have spoken of before that was done by the Provincial Science Advisory Table, we know that we need to work together to bring that reproductive number to below 0.7.
- The good news is that much of this is actually within our hands. It's within our control.
- That's why I remind all of us, as always, to continue with vigilance in those measures for self-protection: staying home, limiting your interactions with those outside your home, wearing a well-fitting mask as much as you can, especially when you are out in public, keeping your physical distance as much as possible from others, people you don't live with, and to please wash your hands regularly.



## Public Health

- The more we all do our part in practising the measures for self-protection, and especially as vaccines come along – and they will come along – the more we're able to do our part, the sooner we will get to where we all want to be, which is with COVID-19 in the rear-view mirror, and enjoying life in our city more like it used to be, before there was such a thing as COVID-19.

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