

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**March 10, 2021 at 2 p.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you, Chief Pegg, and good afternoon. Today I am reporting 473 new cases of COVID-19. 264 people are in hospital, and 53 people are in the ICU. I'm sorry to have to report an additional 4 deaths today.
- You've just heard from the Chief about clinics that the City is going to be operating starting next week. And today our hospital and healthcare partners are working to operate approximately 22 clinics to vaccinate priority groups throughout the city.
- So while we are doing everything possible to vaccinate Toronto as quickly as possible, I want to thank Torontonians for continuing to follow public health advice and urge you to continue doing so.
- These steps for self-protection are as important as ever as we continue to see concerning growth in cases with variants of concern, which spread more easily and cause more severe illness.
- To date, 2,327 cases have screened positive for mutations.
- The majority of confirmed variants continue to be the highly infectious B.1.1.7 variant, also known as the U.K. variant.
- There remains a real risk that we will begin to see an increase in COVID-19 cases over the coming days and weeks.
- The best way to prevent this increase is to stay at home whenever possible. Reducing the number of interactions we have with one another reduces the virus' ability to spread.



## Public Health

- Take care to keep distance between yourself and others not in your household, especially when you are indoors. These measures will reduce your risk of contracting and spreading any version of COVID-19.
- Tomorrow will be the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a pandemic.
- This anniversary coincides with a sobering milestone here in Toronto: we have now passed a total of 100,000 cases. The exact figure today is 100,897 and I would remind you again that the death toll is 2,699 people.
- We talk of exponential growth. Perhaps we can think for a moment in terms of exponential loss and suffering, because there is no way to fully account for the number of family and friends that one life connects with.
- So many have lost loved ones to COVID-19, have fallen ill with the virus, and have had their livelihoods affected.
- I want to acknowledge this because while most of us are still here, the last year has been one of extraordinary challenge as our lives were uprooted.
- I particularly want to thank my team at Toronto Public Health.
- Like all of us, they live with the threat of COVID-19.
- Their work revolves around the virus again and again – all day, every day. And given the significance of the response required, it is common for people at Toronto Public Health to work 10 and 12 hour days, 7 days a week.
- Because of the pandemic many of them find themselves doing jobs entirely outside of their regular work.
- Nonetheless I have seen them take up the work and press through it, past the point of exhaustion, in the face of relentless demands and scrutiny, and now under the pressure to deliver vaccinations through all the channels we are speaking about.

- Public health is the work they wanted to do as a career, but the demands are above and beyond – almost every working minute – and I cannot thank them enough for taking up the challenge for all the people who call Toronto home.
- In all this, we see the resolve and resilience of all Torontonians. We have learned a lot about ourselves as individuals and as members of our community. About what we truly value and what really matters.
- Things like personal connections, such as a warm embrace from a loved one, or a meal with family and friends. And, in many cases, we've learned how much we miss not things, but people and experiences.
- It is heartening then to realize how close we are getting to having those things back. Which is why all of us at Toronto Public Health are committed to rolling out the vaccine as quickly as possible.
- As we do so, we continue to ask you to stay home and, when you leave the house, to wear a mask and to practice physical distancing. This will help us combat the increases we're seeing in variants of concern, and will help us to protect those who are not yet vaccinated.
- A lot has been asked of you in the past year. The truth is more will be asked of you yet. But it is in order to move beyond a past in which we had little choice, toward the future we all want.

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