

Update on COVID-19
Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health
April 7, 2021 at 4 p.m.
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.

- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good afternoon.
- Today I am reporting 1,173 new cases of COVID-19.
- 33 new admissions bring the number of people in hospital to 426.
- 65 people are in the ICU.
- And sadly, I am reporting four more deaths to COVID-19.
- The current number of cases screened positive for variants of concern is 10,382.
- From last Thursday and through today, we have seen almost 7,000 new cases of COVID-19.
- Today the Premier announced further public health measures in Ontario.
- I support any and all solutions that achieve the objective of measurably weakening the disruption that COVID-19 is forcing in all our communities.
- Our job now is to respect and follow those measures.
- We do not have enough time nor do we have enough vaccine to vaccinate our way out of this third wave.
- While we move forward with vaccinations, the success of public health measures lies in the extent to which we adhere to them and keep our distance.
- That I am reporting nearly 7,000 cases in seven days says more about the threat we face than anything I might describe.

- Toronto Public Health continues to work with our health care partners, as you've just heard, across the City on ways to deliver vaccines to create the largest possible benefit for the greatest number of people.
- Our plan, which we developed jointly, will see the continued operation of the immunization clinics that provide vaccines under the parameters of the provincial framework.
- At the same time we are creating opportunities to widen vaccine access for high-risk neighbourhoods by taking vaccines to them, through expanded pop-up and mobile clinics. These neighbourhoods were identified by the Province using data including infection and hospitalization rates for COVID-19, and other factors including racialization, income and quality of housing.
- And Toronto neighbourhoods have had vastly different experiences with COVID-19. Last week, one Toronto neighbourhood within a "hot spot" had a weekly incidence rate of 682 cases per 100,000. In contrast, the city wide incidence rate for the same time period was 196 cases per 100,000 population.
- The extent of the resurgence – the persistence of these high-case counts – compel us to determine what ways will best outsmart the spread of the virus and the variants.
- Like many of you, I am waiting for my turn to be vaccinated. By including specific focus in our vaccination plan, we begin to create a new frontline of immunized people who were most at risk of acquiring and spreading COVID-19, but whom, through their vaccination, now give COVID nowhere to go. This, in turn, creates a protective benefit for everyone.
- If need be, our approach can be adapted again to reflect the circumstances of highest risk and need, and to produce the greatest benefit to the largest number of people.
- Today is the first day that we are back to exclusively online learning for children in the Toronto school systems.

- We concluded yesterday, Toronto has reached the point where there were no alternatives that would provide for continued in-class learning – a decision made with great care and careful deliberation.
- I have said – and Toronto Public Health believes – that schools should operate as safely as possible in the pandemic – but never at all costs.
- To this end, our schools have been safe, and the actions we took were aimed at keeping them that way.
- We have also said that in a pandemic schools should be the first places to open and the last to close.
- Not all homes are homes where the parents can both work from home and supervise online learning.
- Many are homes where neither parent can work from home.
- Many are homes with only one parent, who may work outside the home.
- For some, closing schools sounds like an easy decision, but it is one with many, many implications.
- Our conclusion yesterday was that the circumstances no longer allowed for classroom learning, and so we took the decision after extensive consultation with the school boards and others.
- The spread in the community was being reflected in schools to an extent where we determined community spread would drive risk at schools higher and higher.
- And that leads me to a point I cannot stress strongly enough: we now have asked for a massive sacrifice by our children and young people.

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- Their best learning environment has been taken from them, the protections and stability and connection of the school community withdrawn.
- The extent of the spread in the community imposes a greater burden of living with COVID-19 on children and young people – a burden that people their age should not be asked to bear.
- In exchange, we must act to create circumstances that will allow them back into school as soon as possible.
- That's a simple standard to measure: fewer cases, less spread, more vaccines.
- We've got to get this done. There is not enough vaccine or enough time to vaccinate our way to the other side of this latest, overwhelming wave.
- So please, abide by the stay at home order, practice self-protection measures, get your vaccine as soon as you are eligible. In so doing, everyone in Toronto will be better protected, safer and ultimately healthier.

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