

City of Toronto Access Live  
June 2, 2021

Brad Ross:

Good evening everybody and welcome. My name is Brad Ross, and I am pleased to be your host for this, the city of Toronto's telephone town hall meeting about the COVID-19 vaccination program. Tonight we're joined by mayor John Tory, Dr. Eileen de Villa, Toronto's medical officer of health, and Fire Chief Matthew Pegg, the general manager of the office of emergency management. The city of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabek, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples. The city also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas, and [inaudible 00:00:56] bands.

Brad Ross:

Before we get started at any point during the town hall, if you would like to be connected to the provincial vaccine booking center, you can press \*0 to be transferred directly to the call center, to book your vaccine appointment. Once you have booked your vaccine appointment, just stay on the line and you will be connected back into the telephone town hall. While you're waiting to speak to someone on the provincial booking line, you'll continue to hear this telephone town hall.

Brad Ross:

Now let me explain how a telephone town hall works. Right now residents from all across the city of Toronto are answering their phones and connecting to this discussion. In a way, this is like a traditional town hall where guests arrive and file through the front door, except in place of a front door there are thousands of phones ringing throughout Toronto right now. Once someone answers their phone, they just stay on the line to join the discussion. For those who missed the call, an answering machine message will be left with directions on how to call into the discussion.

Brad Ross:

This telephone town hall technology enables us to reach out and talk with thousands of people from the comfort of their homes. It is a great way for us to stay connected with Toronto residents and ensure that you get the latest information about our important vaccination campaign. If at any point in this discussion you have a question, please press \*3 on your phone keypad to get back in line to ask your question, again, that's \*3 on your phone to ask a question. Anyone listening to the web audio stream can type into the question box to submit a question.

Brad Ross:

We're here tonight to answer questions about the city's vaccination program, but just to be clear, we cannot address specific medical conditions or provide you medical advice at this event. Please refrain from asking questions about your specific medical conditions. If you would like to get a text message with some information on how to get vaccinated, you can press \*8 at any time during this event to be texted a website address with more information on the vaccines and where to get vaccinated. Again, if you'd like to get a text message with that information, all you have to do is press \*8 at any point during this conversation to receive a text from us which will lead you to more information on Toronto's vaccine rollout.

Brad Ross:

As I mentioned earlier, but I'll repeat for anyone just joining, at any point during the town hall if you would like to be connected to the provincial vaccine booking center, you can press \*0 to be directly connected to the call center, to book your vaccine appointment. Once you have booked your vaccine appointment, just stay on the line and you will be connected back into the telephone town hall. While you're waiting to speak to someone on the provincial booking line, you'll continue to hear this town hall.

Brad Ross:

For those of you just joining the call, welcome. This is a telephone town hall with Toronto Mayor John Tory, Dr. Eileen de Villa Toronto's medical officer of health and Fire Chief Matthew Pegg, the general manager of the office of emergency management. I see we still have some more phones to call so as we wait for everyone to join, I'd like to welcome Mayor Tory to the call and ask him to share the latest news on vaccination efforts in our city. Welcome Mayor Tory.

John Tory:

Well, Brad, thank you very much. And I want to just say, first of all, thank you to all the people who have come on so far, and there'll be many more that will come on because we've done these before and they've proven to be a very successful way, as you said, to reach people in the comfort of their own homes, and to provide a lot of information and answer a lot of questions. Secondly, I would like to just express a word of thanks while I have the people that are on the phone to the great team of people across the city. It's been challenging to keep city services going during the course of the pandemic. And of course it's been very challenging to do things like roll out the vaccination program.

John Tory:

And we have a team led by two people, Dr. de Villa the medical officer of health who's with us and Chief Pegg who's been running a lot of the logistical side of this. Very important, all the supports and all the sort of decisions that have to be made as to who shows up where and when. And they've just done an outstanding job as to really distinguish public service leaders. And they've been supported by literally thousands of people including community organizations, public servants, paramedics, firefighters, police officers, nurses, doctors, you name it, and they've done a good job. And that's why we're where we are with respect to the vaccination. And then finally, I just want to thank you, the people who are listening, because the people across Toronto have been helpful to us, they've been patient with us, there's been a lot of tough decisions that have had to be made, whether it's by the province or by ourselves, all made in the interest of saving lives and trying to keep people healthy. But people have been very patient.

John Tory:

And I know people are now frustrated and this has gone on plenty long enough. And one of the reasons we want to give you more information about vaccines is because that represents one of the answers to getting this whole thing over with. And I hope that tonight we can answer your questions and give you the resources and the information you need to be able to make a decision on booking your vaccine or getting other information you need, perhaps for friends or relatives who haven't yet been vaccinated. Now, in the event you have one of those questions, Brad mentioned that you press \*3 and in so doing, you can ask a question of any of the speakers, including myself, at any time during the town hall.

John Tory:

The subject matter tonight is only about the vaccines and directly related matters. That'll end up seeing probably Dr. de Villa answer more of the questions because a lot of them involve, based on past

experience, medical advice that she can give and public health advice. But one thing that I've learned, and I'm not a doctor, but I do know this, that vaccinating residents is the best way for us to get things reopened safely and to get back to the kind of life that we were used to, that things that we had going for us before, and we had a lot going for us before in Toronto. When you get vaccinated you're protecting yourself, your family, your neighbors, your community, your coworkers, you're protecting everybody. I know for some, it's been a challenging decision to make. And so we wanted to make ourselves available by way of this town hall to answer questions, to give you the confidence that you need to get out and get your vaccine. If you haven't already.

John Tory:

Now, the good news is 70% of adults have received their first dose. And so this is a good number, but as you know, 70% is 30% less than everybody. So we need to make sure that we get to the rest of the people that we find ways to help you to help them to get to a vaccination, whether it's some support they need or whether it's just more information that they need. And this will help us in turn to open the city back up and move forward and do so with confidence, and it's the vaccine that will help us to get there.

John Tory:

So whether you need a ride to a vaccine appointment, whether you need help booking your appointment, whether you need a vaccine to come to you because you're homebound or any other kinds of challenges you face, the city is here and we're prepared to help you, and we do have resources to help with that. And so these are the kinds of thing you'll learn about tonight, or raise with us tonight either through the phone or through, as Brad said, a way you can text your question or type your question to us. The vaccine represents our way out of this. So I'm encouraging you please to get your vaccine if you haven't already done so. You can book your appointment during the town hall. He's explained how to do that. I'm sure he'll explain it again. And if you have any additional questions, we've now set up a text facility that 4,000 people have already used, and you can simply text the word "vaccine" to this number 1-833-750-0888, and that will put you into a text facility that we have that answer a lot of questions and give you a lot of information about vaccinations and vaccines.

John Tory:

So again, thank you very much for taking time out of your schedule to join us. We are determined to make sure that this program continues to be as successful as it has been. That can only be the case if you're confident in it, if you understand it, and if you are comfortable with it, and we want to make sure you feel that way coming out of this session tonight. I look forward to hearing your questions and answering those directed to me, and I thank you very much again for taking the time to join us, Brad, over to you.

Brad Ross:

Thank you very much Mayor Tory and welcome to everyone who has just joined us on the phone. If you're just joining us tonight, we're here with Mayor Tory, Dr. Eileen de Villa, Toronto's medical officer of health, and Fire Chief Matthew Pegg, the general manager of the office of emergency management, for our telephone town hall to give you the latest about the city of Toronto's COVID-19 vaccination efforts. This telephone town hall is live and interactive which means that you can ask any of our speakers your questions. So if you have a question for Mayor Tory, Dr. de Villa, or Chief Pegg, just press \*3 on your phone at any time to let us know you'd like to speak live on the call. An operator will take

down your question and put you in line to ask your question live. You'll still be able to hear the town hall conversation while you're waiting to ask a question. And when I call your name, you will be able to speak, be able to ask your question live on air.

Brad Ross:

We're really pleased that so many are joining us this evening. While we will do our best to get to as many questions as we can, we may not be able to get to all of your questions so I encourage you to visit [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19), where there is a wealth of information about vaccines. And COVID-19 in general.

Brad Ross:

If you want to receive a text message, as the Mayor noted, with some more information about how and where to get vaccinated you can press \*8 at any time during this event and receive that information by text. Again, that's \*8. For those listening on a landline, you'll be able to key in a 10 digit phone number to receive a text message. All you have to do is press \*8 at any point during this conversation to receive a text message from us. If at any point during the town hall you would like to book an appointment to get your first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine you can press \*0 on your phone and you will be transferred to the provincial vaccine booking call center. Once you have booked your vaccine appointment just stay on the line and you will be transferred back into this telephone town hall. While you're waiting to be transferred, you will continue to hear this telephone town hall.

Brad Ross:

As well, we will be doing quick real-time poll questions. So we'd like to do one right now before we get going as we still have more people joining us. And we'd like to get a sense of where everyone is joining us from on this telephone town hall. So the first poll question is which part of Toronto do you live in? Press one on your phone for Tobago or York, press two if you are from North York, press three on your phone from the old city of Toronto, press four for East York, and press five on your phone if you are in Scarborough. Again, which part of Toronto do you live in? Press one for Tobago or York, press two for North York, press three for the former city of Toronto, press four on your phone if you are from East York, or five if you are from Scarborough.

Brad Ross:

Thanks to everyone who participated in that poll. This is exciting. We have thousands of residents already in the town hall, and there are still a number of callers still getting connected. So we will be answering your questions [inaudible 00:12:57] in just a couple of minutes. In addition to Mayor John Tory who we just heard from, we're also pleased to be joined by Dr. Eileen de Villa Toronto's medical officer of health, and Fire Chief Matthew Pegg, the general manager of the office of emergency management. Dr. de Villa is here to answer any scientific questions you may have about vaccinations and COVID-19, and Chief Pegg who chairs the immunization task force for the city will be able to answer any questions you have about the operational rollout, the logistics of the vaccination program. For all those who have just joined us, my name is Brad Ross, and I'm joined tonight by Mayor John Tory, Dr. Eileen de Villa, and Fire Chief Matthew Pegg who are ready to answer your questions.

Brad Ross:

If you would prefer not to ask your question live on air you can also visit [toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall](https://toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall) that's one word [toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall](https://toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall) to listen online and type your question for our speakers into the message box. If you'd like to receive a text message with information about how and where to get

vaccinated, you can press \*8 at any time during this event to be texted a website address and toll free number. If you're listening on a landline phone you will be asked to key in a 10 digit phone number. All you have to do is press \*8 at any point during this conversation to receive a text message from us to get information about how and where to get vaccinated.

Brad Ross:

If at any point during the town hall you would like to book an appointment to get your first dose of COVID-19 vaccine you can press \*0 on your phone, and you'll be transferred to the provincial vaccine booking call center. Once you have booked your vaccine appointment just stay on the line and you will be transferred back into the telephone town hall. While you wait to be transferred, you will continue to hear this event. Call volumes will be high, so please be patient.

Brad Ross:

Okay. It looks like we have a number of questions from our callers so let's go to those now. Please remember if you would like to ask a question, just press \*3 on your phone. An operator will take down your question and put you in line to ask your question live. If you would rather leave a message or comment you can do so at [toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall](https://toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall). Okay. We're going to try to get as many of your questions answered tonight as possible so let's start hearing from you. First we have Matt from High Park who has a question about parental consent for children. So perhaps Dr. de Villa, you could take this question. Hi Matt, go ahead, you're live.

Matt:

Hi there. Longtime fan first-time caller.

Brad Ross:

Welcome.

Matt:

With all the data provided by the government with regards to risk of COVID-19, particularly in the case of youth, this 12 to 17 that we're having these open cattle calls for without parental consent, essentially with a product that has only been authorized with emergency use, and is still going through trials with essentially, now we have 0% mortality rate with this age group, and the long-term efficacy and the long-term effects are not currently known. I'm just curious as to how this is happening right now and why this is happening?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So Matt, it's Eileen de Villa here, and thank you for your question. I think it's important that we talk about COVID and its impact on children. And you're quite right that when we look at COVID in children, thankfully the illness that ensues is generally mild, but we do know of cases and they are growing in number and we are hearing more and more about cases of COVID in children that are resulting in long-term persistent negative health effects. Whether it is weakness and muscle weakness or neurological issues, clarity of thinking or foggiess, I guess I should say of thinking, there are a number of different longer term impacts of COVID that we're hearing about more and more through medical practitioners all around the world, and these do affect young people.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So what has happened is that has been vaccine approved for use in this country and in particular, it's the Pfizer product that has been approved for those aged 12 to 17 now. There are ongoing studies for younger individuals, but those studies have not been completed yet, but the evaluation has occurred, and it has been deemed to be a product that is safe for use in individuals as young as 12 given the impact of COVID-19 on our community and on people of all ages taking into consideration the direct impacts of the disease on individuals, but as well the longer term consequences associated with COVID infection. I hope that addresses the question. Brad shall I send it back to you?

Brad Ross:

Thank you. Thank you, Dr. de Villa, and thank you for the question Matt, appreciate that. Just looking at poll results from the last question, and it's great to see residents joining us tonight from all across Toronto. So welcome. Fargo is representing big time in this pool. And our next question is actually from Scarborough and it's Shakira who is calling from Scarborough. Shakira what is your question and who is it for please?

Shakira:

Yes. Hi, thank you. I just wanted to get my question. I don't know who it's for, but I will just tell you what the question is. So basically I just want to get some clarification on what the vaccine, what it does. Is it going to guarantee us that we won't get the virus? What is the percentage of guaranteeing I'm not contracting the virus? And the second part to that question is, does the vaccine protect us from the new variants that's out because there's so many variants that's coming out and everyone's taking the vaccine, but we're not sure if that's going to protect us from those variants or even getting the virus. Yeah, that's it.

Brad Ross:

Okay Shakira thank you so much. I think that's a question for Dr. de Villa.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Yes. Thanks, thanks. Shakira, thank you for the question. And I think it's an important one for people to have answered. So very, very briefly there is no perfect vaccine. I think we should just be very upfront about that. There is no such thing as 100% protection from a vaccine, it just doesn't exist. However, what we have seen as a result of all the studies and the actual real life experience when it comes to the use of COVID vaccines is that they are remarkably effective, all very, very highly effective in terms of preventing serious outcomes associated with COVID-19 infection. That includes hospitalization or ICU admission and death. These are the most serious outcomes associated with COVID-19 infection. For the mRNA vaccines, that's Pfizer and Moderna, it's over 90% efficaciousness. When they did the studies they showed that you were really seeing really good antibody level protection, and it reduces the likelihood even of symptomatic infection. But as I said, there is no perfect unfortunately in any treatment or vaccine that's available for any disease. However, they are incredibly effective in terms of reducing those most serious outcomes, and as well of reducing symptomatic infection.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

When it comes to the new variants, this is one of those things where we have to learn as we go along. But even with the most recent variant that has been really affecting places like England, that B1617 variant, that one is one that's giving rise to some concern, but they're finding that even with those new variants thus far you're getting protection. It may not be 100% and it's not perfect, but it's certainly

better than no vaccine on board. And that's what we're aiming for. The more protection we can afford for ourselves and for the entire community, the more we're able to reduce the risk of transmission. And we want to be especially careful for those who are the oldest in our community, because we know when they get impacted by COVID-19 they have an increased risk for those most serious outcomes. So I would strongly encourage people that even as new variants are emerging, we know that vaccine is one of the best measures that we can take as individuals, and frankly, as communities to protect ourselves and to protect each other. I'll send it back to you, Brad.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Thank you, Dr. de Villa, and thank you for the question Shakira. Just a reminder that this is your opportunity to ask questions directly to our speakers. So if you have a question for Mayor Tory, Chief Pegg, or Dr. de Villa, just press star three on your phone at any time to let us know you'd like to speak live on the call, and the operator will take down your question and put you in line to ask the question mod. If you'd like to get a text message from us with information about how and where to book your vaccine appointment, you can press star eight at any time during this event to get a text message. Anyone on a landline will be asked to key in a 10-digit mobile phone number. If at any point during the town hall, you would like to book an appointment to get your first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, you can press star zero on your phone and you will be transferred to the provincial vaccine call center.

Brad Ross:

Once you have booked your vaccine appointment, just stay on the line and you will be transferred back into the telephone town hall. If you don't want everyone to hear your comments, you can enter your question at [toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall](https://toronto.ca/vaccinetownhall). That's one word, vaccinetownhall. So we're going to take another question, this one from Ina in the Keele Lawrence area. Ina, go ahead. Welcome to the telephone town hall.

Ina:

Thank you so much. This question is for Mayor Tory. You're doing a great job. My question is that my husband and I both got vaccinated on April 2nd and 3rd at Humber River Hospital online. Ever since then, two weeks I've been phoning them, because they said that they would email me for my second dose. I phoned and they had no answers. I phoned them today. They still have no answers. I don't even have a tentative booking for my second dose. What can I do-

John Tory:

Did you say you just got your first dose in April, Enid?

Ina:

April 2nd. Yes.

John Tory:

Yeah. Well, Dr. De Villa may be able to give more precision to this, but there was a booking interval time, like a time between the first and second doses that was set by the province. And it was certainly well more than, say, I'll say at maximum it would be like four or five weeks now, since you had the first one. And while they've talked about perhaps expediting those, I think you just have to ... I know as hard as it is because you want to get that second dose, and lots of people are very anxious to get it, you have to

be patient. And as long as you have, do you have the receipt that they gave you from the first vaccination so that you have a record of that with Humber River? ... She's not there, but-

Brad Ross:

Whoop, I think we lost Ina.

John Tory:

Okay. But the bottom line is, and again, Dr. de Villa may add to this, but they're going to be in touch with you, and you just have to have confidence that the period of time is a little longer than the sort of, say, four weeks that are passed since April, and that they will be in touch. And part of the problem they have when people phone is they're getting huge numbers of phone calls and they just can't handle them all because the people that are answering the phone don't necessarily have the record keeping system in front of them that has a record of when you got vaccinated and when your next call is likely to come. But they will be in touch. I'm pretty confident of that. Humber River is running a really good shop, together with the other hospitals, during the pandemic and vaccination period, and I'm sure they're organized enough to make sure that you get your second vaccination. What is the time period, Dr. de Villa? I just forget it, and I didn't want to say the wrong number.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Yeah, no. Mr. Mayor, it is, they've set them up at more or less around 16 weeks between the first dose and the second dose, as approved by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. And I would just echo your comment that our vaccination partners, our hospital partners, all those who've been active participants in the vaccination campaign are absolutely committed to making sure that they're providing the best service. Right now that interval between the first dose and the second dose has been set up at more or less 16 weeks, up to a maximum of 16 weeks. That's roughly when most of the vaccination partners, including hospitals, were setting up those second dose appointments.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

But as supply becomes more and more available, over time, you'll note that the province has adjusted things such that people are moving up their second doses. They've started now with 80-year-olds or older, and as we go on, the idea is to move and advance people through and get them their second doses as much as supply allows, making sure that we're getting in there in the time period as laid out, the maximum time period as laid out by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. So I hope that helps both you, Mr. Mayor, and the questioner.

John Tory:

Yes. I hope Enid. Enid, just a bit of patience. It sounds like it may be more like July before you hear from them just based on, that's kind of even a little shorter than 16 weeks, but be patient, and good luck and stay healthy. Thank you. Over to you, Brad.

Brad Ross:

Thank you, Mayor Tory, and thank you, Dr. de Villa, and thank you, Ina, for the question. We're going to go to a question from our website chat. I think this one is for you, Chief Pegg. It's from Kathy, and Kathy asks, "If AstraZeneca is not readily available, when will people be able to book their second dose of either Pfizer or Moderna?"



Matthew Pegg:

Hi, Kathy. Chief Pegg here. Very nice to talk to you tonight. We are working on those details with the province. So as you may have heard us explain previously, all of the city-operated vaccine clinics are clients of the provincial booking system. And that means that we rely on the province of Ontario's vaccine booking system to book every appointment in our clinics. They are, they being the province, they are hard at work right now, working through the logistics and the details with respect to how that integration from first dose AstraZeneca and second dose of Pfizer will work. And as it stands, literally, that was ongoing today. As it stands right now, we have yet to receive the final details or specifics with respect to how and when that will be made available.

Matthew Pegg:

I don't think it will be too far off. I expect that we'll get that information back from the province in fairly short order. And as soon as we do, we'll make sure that it is communicated across all of our platforms, including our principal point of information or source of information, which is [toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19). So apologies, I don't have specific on that yet. Like I say, we're waiting for the province of Ontario to finalize a couple of things in the backend of the booking system, but stay tuned. That's certainly coming.

Brad Ross:

Perfect. Thank you, Chief Pegg. Before we go back to the questions, let's just do another quick poll. As we've heard, we've made great progress in getting Torontonians their first dose of COVID-19 vaccines, but there's still work to do. So we want to make sure everyone in Toronto is able to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Brad Ross:

So our next question is, do you know how to book an appointment to get your first vaccine dose? Press one on your phone if yes, you do know how to book an appointment for a first dose of vaccine. And if you've already got your first dose, that's great. You can go ahead and press one here, too. Press two on your phone if you don't know how to book an appointment for your first dose of vaccine, and press three on your phone if you know how to make an appointment, but you're not sure about getting the vaccine yet and want some more information.

Brad Ross:

Once again, do you know how to book an appointment to get your first vaccine dose? Press one on your phone if yes, and press two on your phone if you don't know how to book an appointment, and press three on your phone if you know how to make an appointment and are not sure about getting the vaccine yet and want some more information, which is why we're here this evening.

Brad Ross:

Thank you everybody for participating in that poll. Overwhelming 90% do know, answered yes, so that's terrific. Thank you so much. All right, we're going to get back to your questions now. We have a question from John in North York. John, go ahead. Welcome to the telephone town hall.

John:

Thanks very much, Brad. I just want to thank Mayor Tory, Dr. de Villa and Chief Pegg for their leadership through very, very difficult circumstances. My question's a little bit more nuanced from the other

questions. I received the AstraZeneca back in March, March 24th, to be specific. I'm 66 years old, and I'm just wondering whether I should continue to wait, as Dr. de Villa and Chief Pegg were mentioning, to see what's going to happen re the supply of AstraZeneca, or whether I should register on the provincial system to get my second shot. I'm just wondering your counsel in that regard.

Brad Ross:

So perhaps Dr. de Villa could handle that question for us. Thank you, John, for the question.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Yeah, so ... you know, what, why don't I aim to tackle that one? You know, I think that there is a little bit of personal choice that's available here, but at this point in time, it sounds like you got an AstraZeneca dose back in March, and you're now thinking and contemplating the second dose. So at this point in time, as I understand it, you have a couple of options. One is to get a second dose of AstraZeneca, and that is available through the channel in which you first received that first dose. The alternative that should be available shortly, given that the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has officially stated that if you got AstraZeneca as a first dose, you may get a Pfizer or Moderna as a second dose. But as the chief just answered in the earlier question, we are waiting from the province to hear how that will actually get operationalized, and we'll be putting out messages very, very shortly in respect of what that looks like on a very practical basis.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

But you do have some options available to you. And the good news is that all the evidence right now suggests that getting two doses of vaccine on board is the best thing that you can do to help protect yourself and others around you. But I would, of course, remind all of us about the benefits of continuing to maintain distance for now, to wear a mask when you can't maintain that distance, and to take advantage of the lower risk environment that's afforded by our ability to spend more time outdoors given the better weather at this time of year.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So I hope that helps. I realize it's not a complete and perfect answer yet, because there is still some details that need to be worked out by our provincial counterparts. But please know that they, I know that they're working on it. The chief just mentioned in his earlier answer that there is active conversation happening on this. And as soon as we have those details articulated by the province, we will be sure to put that information out through all the many channels that are available to us. I hope that helps.

Brad Ross:

Thanks. Sorry-

John Tory:

John, it's the other John here. Can I just chime in on that and just say-

Brad Ross:

Of course.

John Tory:

I'm in the same circumstances you were. We're at the same age, even though I know I look much older, but I blame that on television. And I just want to say this, because I think it may be inherent in your question. I am going to, I had the first dose of AstraZeneca a while ago, and I'm going to stick with it because I satisfied myself at that time that it was perfectly safe, satisfied by talking to Dr. de Villa and other doctors and others. I've watched the millions of people around the world who've had it, like literally tens of millions in great Britain and millions here. So I'm going to stick with it.

John Tory:

And I say that, not because I can give you any scientific advice, but just to say that I'm confident that that vaccine was approved here by Health Canada, has been given to millions of people around the world, including in Britain and Canada, and I'm going to just, you know, I'll get my call when the time comes from the place I got the first vaccination and have the second one of the same vaccine. And so I just say that because I think there's a lot of discussion going on about that, and I just have done all the kinds of inquiries I'm sure you've done and found that there'd be no reason not to do that. So I'll just pass that on as nothing more than what I'm doing myself.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Yep. Mr. Mayor, if I can echo that: I think it's really important for people to remember exactly that point the mayor said, which is that millions of people have benefited from this vaccine. And in fact, looking in particular at the United Kingdom, they are progressing through their reopening, and have had a good experience for sure, and have seen dramatic drops in COVID-19 as a result of the measures they took. And they're very, very good, very efficient vaccination campaigns. So I think that the proof is in the pudding when it comes to vaccines and the experience that we've seen around the world.

Brad Ross:

All right. Thank you, Dr. de Villa, and thank you, Mayor Tory. And John, thank you for your question. So just a recap of the poll results that I just asked about: do you know how to book an appointment to get your first vaccine dose? So 83% of you say yes, 7% of you say no, so hopefully you'll get some information tonight on how to do that, and 10% of you are unsure or need more information. So again, that's why we're here tonight. Thank you for participating in that poll. And we're going to go to our next caller, and that is Sherry from Scarborough. Welcome to the telephone town hall, Sherry. What's the question?

Sherry:

My question is, if I already had my first dosage ... by the way, thank you for this town hall meeting. It's very informative. And yeah, so my question is, if I'm booked for my second dose in August, can I do it earlier?

Brad Ross:

So perhaps, Dr. de Villa, you can help with that. Thank you, Sherry.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Correct. And thank you, Sherry, for the question. What the province has done ... and again, it depends, I assume your first dose was a Pfizer or a Moderna? ... Did we lose Sherry?

Brad Ross:

Sherry, are you ... You still there, Sherry?

Sherry:

It's a Pfizer. Yes.

Brad Ross:

Pfizer. Okay.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Sorry, it was a Pfizer?

Sherry:

Yes.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Okay. Just wanted to make sure. So what has happened now is that the province has put out what they're calling an accelerated rollout schedule for that second dose. So right now, as of this week, the province has allowed for those who are aged 80 and over to start booking their second doses and to pull them up earlier than they might have been booked, because at the outset, those appointments were booked first dose, and then the second dose roughly 16 weeks later. But they are accelerating the timeline for those second doses. And right now they're taking care of those who are 80 years of age and older, and allowing them to move up that second dose to an earlier time and to book an earlier time.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

On June 14th, they're going to be opening up that opportunity to those age 70 and over. And then from there, it will all depend on when you received your vaccine. So if you received your first dose between the 8th of March and the 18th of April, your opportunity to move up your second dose opens on June the 28th. For those who received their first dose between April 19th and May the 9th, that opportunity to move up that second dose opens on July 19th. And then those who received their first dose between the week of May 10th and May 30th can start to move up their second dose appointments starting on August the second. So that's the schedule that has been put out by the provincial government around second dose vaccines. And I know that this should be available on our website, as the chief mentioned, [toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19), but I'm sure it is also available on the provincial website in case you weren't able to write down all those dates for second dose eligibility. I do hope that helps, Sherry.

Brad Ross:

Thank you, Dr. de Villa, and Sherry, thank you very much for the question. We're going to go next to Colleen, who is calling from Scarborough. Colleen, go ahead. You're live and welcome to the telephone town hall.

Colleen:

Hi, thank you. My question is, I received the Moderna shot, and when they call me to rebook, I would like to receive the Moderna shot again. How will I know, can I ask when they call me? Can I ask what shot they're going to give me? I don't want to mix them.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Colleen, thank you. Dr. de Villa?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Thanks for the question. I think it is reasonable to ask, and a number of clinics are actually indicating which vaccine they are giving on that particular day. It is a little challenging at times to be very precise, especially when you're planning for a clinic a couple of days or weeks in advance. But most of the providers for vaccine have some sense as to which vaccine they're providing. Certainly on the day of itself, they'll be able to tell you, and in the days preceding. But if you're booking something that's a few weeks in advance, I admit that supply may be a bit of an issue.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

That being said, I realize that you've indicated that you'd like to stick to the same vaccine. But I just want to remind all those on the call that the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has issued a recommendation, and it is a strong recommendation, that if for some reason, when you're about to get your second dose of an mRNA vaccine, so that being the Pfizer or the Moderna, if for some reason on the day that you're there for your second dose vaccine, that the vaccine that you got as your first dose is not available, it's quite reasonable to interchange. So they have talked about what they call the interchangeability of these two vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna, and that it's safe and it's effective.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So I would remind people that, look, if you're there for your second dose and it's the other vaccine that's available, I would still encourage you to get it, because I would prefer that you got that vaccine rather than delaying it, and then potentially not getting the vaccine because of convenience or that it's forgotten. I would encourage people to take the vaccine while they have that opportunity, because you're not fully vaccinated unless you've got the two doses of a two dose regime. I'll send it back to- [crosstalk 00:42:44]

Brad Ross:

Okay, thank you.

Matthew Pegg:

Brad, hey, can I-

Brad Ross:

Yes, of course, Chief. Go ahead.

Matthew Pegg:

All right, thanks. Colleen, very nice to speak with you. Just one thing I'll add for the benefit of everyone on the call and just to reassure everyone, regardless of where any of us received our vaccine, whether that is in a city-operated clinic, one of our Team Toronto partner clinics such as a hospital, a pharmacy, wherever that is, that is all being registered and stored within a system known as the province of Ontario's COVax system. So we all have the privilege of resting assured that the system logs all of those details. It knows, there's information, of course, about where you received your vaccine, when you received it, and what specific vaccine. So I know we, Brad, we've received a number of questions about

some folks not being sure, or they may have forgotten, which vaccine they have received. Rest assured that all of that is stored in the COVax system and is accessible across any clinic across the network across the province.

Brad Ross:

Thank you for that, Chief-

John Tory:

In fact, Brad, just ... Brad, sorry. Just from a safety standpoint, I learned when I was out visiting clinics this weekend, and the chief and the doctor know this, but even down to the little tiny bottle that your injection came out of, they have the number of that bottle recorded in the system. So they have everything recorded to be safe and to be thorough. And it's extraordinary, the length they go to make sure everybody's kept safe, and they have a full record of everything. So it really is quite extraordinary to see. And it's really the work that I mentioned at the beginning, that those thousands of people have done at these clinics right across the province, keeping track of all of this and making sure everything's kept safe for people.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Well, thank you, all three, for those thorough answers for Colleen. Thank you, Colleen, for calling. We have an online question. I think this one's for you, chief. It's from Mark, and he's asking, "Do city-run clinics give out excess doses at the end of the day as second doses?"

Matthew Pegg:

Hi. Good afternoon, Mark. Nice to speak with you. Generally speaking, we do not. And the reason that we do not is, and I'm going to go back a little bit in time. Initially, when we first opened the clinics and were in the initial phases of first-dose administration, any unused doses were maintained. No doses are wasted. And they were then transferred the next day to support some of our mobile and sprint clinic strategies, or our Sprint Strategies and mobile clinics operated by hospitals and some of our Team Toronto partners.

Matthew Pegg:

As we have moved forward, and I'll give you an example as early as this week: we put out an announcement that on Monday, we were able to add an additional 10,000 appointments to the clinic capacity this week. That, those 10,000 appointments, are the result of unused doses from a previous appointment slot. So some of them are missed appointments or no-shows, some of them were unbooked appointments. So rest assured that no dose of vaccine gets wasted. But because the city-operated clinics operate on the provincial booking system and do not operate on the basis of first come, first serve or walk-in, the way that we manage doses is they're held, they are reallocated immediately such that no dose goes to waste and so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to book a confirmed appointment and receive the vaccine.

Brad Ross:

Perfect. Thank you, chief. Thank you for the question, Mark. Just a reminder to everybody that if you want to book your vaccine appointment, now you can press star zero on your phone. That's star zero, and you will be transferred to the provincial call center where you can book an appointment. You will not be disconnected from the telephone town hall, and as soon as you've made your appointment,

you'll be right back with us. So again, that star zero, if you wish to book your vaccine appointment through the provincial booking center. Okay, we're going to go to our next question. And that is from [inaudible 00:46:42] in Scarborough. And sorry if I mispronounced your name, [inaudible 00:46:45], go ahead. You're live.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, thanks so much. Originally, I had a question for John Tory, but I actually want to change it to Dr. De Villa. Only because you had talked about all these new variants that every single city, state and country is going through right now, with that being said, they are still opening up and they've never had a lockdown like Toronto. So do you think that if we scrapped our high PCR testing, which is obviously should be a lot lower than 45, that Toronto would have been opened up months ago rather than still being locked down? And by Toronto I mean Ontario as well.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Yeah. I think I would say this, the decisions have never come easy. These are not easy decisions to make. And the decisions around what really stays open or what needs to close, one, are taken at the provincial level. And two, have really been based as much as possible on the best available evidence and science. And this is not an easy task, particularly when you're dealing with a new virus. A new virus that was only identified and sequenced in early 2020, mid-January to be precise. And so there was much learning going on in the global community. The scientific community, the public health community around this virus, how it transmits variants, how transmissible they are.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

And you'll remember at the very beginning, we didn't even have a vaccine. And the fact that even less than a year after identifying this virus, that we actually have safe and effective vaccines, I think is a remarkable testament to the work of the scientific community and how people have come together to really fight this virus and do the best we can to use science to protect ourselves.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So, I don't know that I can go backwards and think about what might have happened, but I am very much focused on the future, and I know that to the extent that we continue practice good behaviors in terms of keeping distance and reducing the transmission of COVID-19 through those measures for self-protection. And the more we are able to get vaccine coverage across our population, both for first doses and subsequently for second doses, the sooner we'll be able to resume life more like it was before there was such a thing as COVID-19 in our world. So, I'll send it back to you, Brad.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Thank you, Dr. De Villa. [Inaudible 00:49:33] thank you so much for the question. Before we go back to the questions we're going to do another quick poll. Now, before we ask about first doses, but as you know, we need everyone in Toronto to get the second dose of vaccine when it's their turn, if we're going to beat this pandemic. So our next question is, do you know how and when you're able to get your second dose of the vaccine? Press one on your phone if you know when you're eligible for a second dose and do either have your second dose appointment already, or you know how to get one. Press two on your phone, if you know when you're eligible to receive a second dose, but you don't have an appointment, or you're not sure how to make a second dose appointment and press three on your

phone, if you don't know when you're eligible to receive a second dose or how to make an appointment for your second dose.

Brad Ross:

Once again, the question is, do you know how and when you're able to get your second dose of vaccine, press one on your phone, if you know when you're eligible for your second dose and do either have your appointment already, or you know how to get one. Press two on your phone, if you know when you're eligible to receive a second dose, but you don't have an appointment, or you're not sure how to make a second dose appointment and press three on your phone if you don't know when you're eligible to receive a second dose or how to make an appointment for your second dose. Thank you everybody for participating in that poll. Now, we're going to get back to questions from you and we'll go to Nikolina from Toronto. Nikolina, go ahead, you're live.

Nikolina:

Hi, good evening. I was just wondering, is it safe for someone that has blood clotting issues and auto-immune disorders to get the vaccine? And also, if someone did contact COVID, should they be vaccinated and how soon after they recover should they be vaccinated?

Brad Ross:

Nikolina, thank you for [inaudible 00:51:36].

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So, [crosstalk 00:51:37] question. I just jumped right in. I'm sorry, Brad. I assumed that question would be for me. I think in general, there are very few conditions that exist outside of allergy to any component of the vaccine that would be what they call a contraindication or a reason not to get vaccine. However, I think for those who have unique medical circumstances and conditions, the best thing to do is to actually have a conversation with your healthcare provider, who is knowledgeable about the specifics of your conditions and can actually discuss your very specific risks. To my mind, that's one of the most important things that can be done. And I think it's a very important step in terms of informing oneself properly around taking a vaccine. And sorry, there was a second part to the question, which I've just lost, and it was a good question. So I did want to make sure I answered it.

Brad Ross:

Yeah, Nikolina is still on the line.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

It was about being sick and getting vaccine afterwards. That's what I... Have I got that right?

Nikolina:

Yes. How soon after you recover should they be vaccinated?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So first of all, I think it's important for people to recognize that even if one has had a COVID-19 infection, there is still value and still good reason to get COVID vaccination. So what's recommended at this point in time, is that if you have a COVID infection, you should be isolating at home and staying away from all



others, taking care of yourself, of course, seeking medical attention is needed, but hopefully if you have a COVID infection, it doesn't require that level of medical intervention, just that isolation to make sure that you're not giving COVID the chance to spread to somebody else.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Once you've recovered and you don't have symptoms, it is reasonable then. And you're beyond the period of time of isolation. So, you're no longer meant to be in isolation, you've recovered from your infection. You don't have symptoms anymore. From that point forward, it is reasonable to go and get a COVID vaccine. And in fact, it's recommended to do so because it is still an action that can be taken to protect yourself from future infection and to protect others around you.

Brad Ross:

Thank you, Dr. De Villa and thank you, Nikolina for the question. Let's take a look at the poll results from our last poll question, which was about second doses. It was, do you know how, and when you're able to get your second dose? The vaccine, 62% of you say you know when and are eligible and how, 23%, say you know when you're eligible, but not how and 15%, say you don't know when you're eligible or how to book your second dose appointment. So, hopefully we can answer some of those questions for you this evening and we're going to go to our next question, which is online. And this one is from Joe and perhaps for you, Mr. Mayor. Joe, simply asked, how can we get involved and help with these clinics?

John Tory:

Well, I think since most of them are... We have clinics that are run, of course, by the city. There are nine of them and that's been done by a great team of people, including some people who volunteer, but most of them are people who are assigned from other duties inside the public health department, for example, to help us with that. I think the best way might well be to volunteer your time with one of the many community organizations that are helping us put these clinics on, and you're probably familiar with the ones that are nearest to you in terms of where you live in the city. Because I've talked myself just at the clinics I visited the last several weekends, too many people who are volunteering and they're helping do things just to help with the lines and things like that.

John Tory:

Because we use public health people and people like that to actually register people on the system because there's some training that's involved in getting that skill. And, of course, the people who do the vaccinating inside the clinics are medical people, paramedics, they're nurses, doctors, and so on. I don't know the answer to this and the chief will chime in, whether we have a volunteer program that would allow you to work at one of our city run clinics. I honestly don't know the answer to that question, but I know many of the organizations, because it isn't just about helping at the clinics.

John Tory:

We have a great need for help out in the community to actually help in the process of getting people to come to get vaccinated. And there's been a huge outreach effort that we've been making as a city to go to some of the people that are sometimes harder to reach, literally to the point sometimes of knocking on doors and that sort of thing. So, there's organizations out there, a lot of community health and other organizations that are doing that in partnership with the city and with the hospitals.

John Tory:

And of course, you can always volunteer one of your hospitals. Pretty well, all the hospitals in Toronto are involved in the vaccination program and you can volunteer and they would probably put you to work as well. They're doing something good for them generally or specifically with regard to the vaccination effort. Chief, do we have a volunteer program at the city clinics?

Matthew Pegg:

Hi, Mr. Mayor. Chief Pegg, here. There is a volunteer registration process that the province of Ontario operates on our collective behalf across the province. It is available. That is a registry system that's available on the [ontario.ca/covid-19](https://ontario.ca/covid-19). I may not have that exactly right, but the Ontario government's COVID-19 site. And there's a section on that website that deals with wanting to volunteer, wanting to, in essence, sign up to help. So, we avail ourselves of those services, and by registering on that site, it also provides opportunities that are outside of city operated clinics. So, that's why I would recommend that you go.

John Tory:

One last thing, Brad. Sorry, go ahead there doctor.

Brad Ross:

Yeah, sure, of course.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Sorry, Mr. Mayor. I just wanted to add that without having to sign up on any website or any community agency, not that I'm discouraging people from doing that, but a very simple thing that all of us can do is to actually ask those in our circles, whether it's family, friends, neighbors, have they received a vaccine? And if they haven't help them book and get to that appointment, I would just point out that right now, there are about 27% of our 80 plus members in our community are unvaccinated. And these are the people who are at highest risk for bad outcomes, serious outcomes associated with a COVID infection.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So, if there's an 80 year old or older that you know of, who hasn't gotten vaccinated, I would encourage you to go and help them book that appointment and to get vaccinated. And the 70 plus, the 60 plus, it doesn't matter what age category we're talking about. I would encourage you to ask people in your circle of friends and families and neighbors, do they have their vaccine? If you've got your vaccine, tell them about your experience and then do everything you can to help them actually book that appointment and get to that appointment. I think that's a really helpful thing for all of us to do.

Brad Ross:

Excellent point. Mr. Mayor, did you want to add something?

John Tory:

Brad, that's exactly what I was going to say, but the doctor, A, beat me to it and B, said it much better than I could, but that's the most important volunteering people could do, for someone they know, or someone they encounter who hasn't been vaccinated. So that's it. Thank you.

Brad Ross:

Indeed. Thank you everybody. And thank you, Joe, for that excellent question. Again, I'm just going to remind you all that you can press star eight to get a text with links, to more information about the vaccination efforts and vaccine in general. Again, that's star eight. And also if you haven't been able to book your first dose, you can press star zero on your phone right now, and you'll be transferred to the provincial call center booking system. You will not be disconnected from this town hall, once you've made your appointment, you'll be right back in. So again, that's star zero, if you want to book your first vaccine dose, you can do so right now. Okay, we're going to go to another question. This one is from Pete in Hunts Club, Upper Beaches. Hi, Pete. Welcome, you're live. Go ahead.

Matt:

Hi. So, my question is... Well, first of all, I just say that I think that mayor Tory and Dr. Villa did a fantastic job. I'm one that believes in science and people that are smarter than me. My wife is a nurse, my uncle was head of directors of forensic science. So, I've always believed in people that are smarter than me. I had the AstraZeneca shot for the first time and I'm waiting for my second dose of whatever the medical professionals tell me to do. I recently had a meeting with someone on the street, a friend of mine, and he told me he is against getting the vaccine. And I just wonder what is some information quickly that I can tell someone when you come across these situations that you can tell them to convince them to get a vaccine.

Brad Ross:

There may be some key messages there for Pete Dr. De Villa.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Well, Pete, thank you for the question. And again, thank you for your interest in actually speaking to a friend who is obviously expressing some reluctance around vaccine. I think first and foremost, what is helpful in these circumstances is to tell your friend about your own experience with vaccine and the experience of others around you that have had vaccine. I would also point to the experiences around the world. There are a number of other countries that are a little ahead of us in respect of vaccine and therefore a little ahead of us in terms of reopening and resuming activities that are more part of life, as we knew it before there was a COVID-19.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So, I think that that's, also, I hope very motivating. But I think finally the piece that is probably worth exploring with those who are reluctant to get vaccinated is to find out, well, what is the reason for that? What seems to be the block for them in terms of getting vaccine? And then there's lots of information on our website to help specifically address those questions. Each person actually has their own unique interests and concerns and questions around vaccine. And I think first and foremost, when it comes to addressing issues around hesitancy or reluctance for vaccination, it's just important to understand, well, where is that reluctance coming from? What seems to be at the core of it so that we can start to have conversation?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

I think it's really important for people to know that there are many of us in the medical profession, and in the health professions, who are willing to have conversation and talk about a vaccine very, very openly. Because I think that it's that kind of conversation, particularly in a trusted relationship. If this friend has a trusted healthcare provider or a doctor, that's often the kind of relationship that allows for

that conversation to happen in an open and honest way, and hopefully we'll move him or her towards vaccine.

Brad Ross:

Perfect. Thank you. That's a great question, Pete. I appreciate that. And Dr. De Villa, thank you for helping us all talk to our friends and family who may be sitting on the fence about vaccines. So, we're going to go next to Bonnie in Scarborough. Bonnie, go ahead. I think you have a question for Chief Pegg.

Bonnie:

Yes I do. I received my first dose of the AstraZeneca back on March the 12th. So I know I'm eligible. My question is, does the city have any indication of when more doses of AstraZeneca will be received in the pharmacies?

Matthew Pegg:

Hi Bonnie, Chief Pegg here. Nice to speak with you. Unfortunately, we do not. We receive all of our vaccine from the province. It is, of course, all of the vaccines including AstraZeneca are provided to the province by the government of Canada, and our immunization task force team does not have direct visibility into vaccine availability, specifically AstraZeneca and specifically vaccine availability or allocation to pharmacies. So, we tend to get that or get to see that on a shorter term basis or a more imminent basis and we'll certainly continue to do our very best to communicate that. I will defer to Dr. De Villa in the off chance that we may have seen something over the past day or so. Dr. De Villa, anything you wish to add?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

No, unfortunately chief, no specific information to add, but I would suggest to Bonnie that probably best to stay in close contact with the place where that first dose was received. They may have their own unique channels of information, particularly if it's a pharmacy, they may have some insight directly from the provincial government themselves.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Thank you both. And thank you, Bonnie for the question. A question online from Nathan, and I think this one is for you Dr. De Villa. If I am fully vaccinated, do I still need to wear a mask and physically distance?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

For now, Nathan, that is the advice that we're offering to people. At this point in time, I would suggest that the provincial government does have a reopening plan and is offering more and more details around what fully vaccinated people can do as we progress through the various steps of the reopening plan. So, I would stay tuned. I expect that there should be more details coming from our provincial partners in the coming days and weeks on what opportunities will be available for us, as more and more of us get our first dose of vaccine, and then our second dose of vaccine thereafter.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

But I'll just make this one little point, that you are not considered fully vaccinated until you are at least two weeks after receiving that second dose. You need the opportunity, not only for that first dose to

have had the effect, but as well, that second dose. And it's generally deemed to be fully in place and with its most fulsome effect at least at the outset two weeks after that second dose of vaccine.

Brad Ross:

Great. Okay, thank you Dr. De Villa, and Nathan, thank you very much for that question. We're going to go next to Eli or Eli. I apologize, from the city of Toronto, please go ahead. You're live.

Eli:

Hey there, thanks very much for taking this. I wanted to find out a little bit more about the city strategy and plan to get our homeless and housing insecure neighbors vaccinated. I know that it's definitely difficult to book a vaccine for people who are either technologically latecomers or who don't have access to the internet or computers. And so, what is the city planning on doing to get all of our neighbors vaccinated and not just those who have access to a computer and internet?

Brad Ross:

Yep. Great question there. Absolutely, there's a plan, maybe Mayor. Tory, did you want to fill this one? And then [inaudible 01:08:02].

John Tory:

Yeah, I'll start and Dr. De Villa, I'm sure will fill in some holes I'll probably leave. We realized from the outset that this was, for some of the reasons you mentioned, and from the very fact that those neighbors, as you say, there are people who are sometimes moving around, they're not necessarily by definition because they're experiencing homelessness. They're not necessarily in one place. And so, we knew that what we had to do was make sure that we were the ones that were mobile and thanks to some great efforts made by our firefighters and by our paramedics and others that have been involved with our health partners.

John Tory:

We've had a significant, a very significant number of... I'll call them outreach clinics. They are mobile and they go not only to the shelters, for example, and to the hotels where we're sheltering people during the pandemic, but also to the drop-in centers and other places where people experiencing homelessness are likely to be found during the day or at other times. We've had to adjust some of the hours to take account of the fact that we're more likely to find the people at night, and to be candid, it is often taken a bit more time in terms of some of the information we're providing tonight by a telephone town hall. And as you say, maybe some of those people don't have access to this kind of thing. And as a result, we spent the time talking to them about the process of getting vaccinated. I was able to report today, and somebody will correct me on the number if I'm wrong, but at our news conference just today, I reported on the fact that there've been some 7,500 people, either those experiencing homelessness in shelters and in encampments or in these drop-in center type settings plus staff. So the total includes staff, but most of those would be people experiencing homelessness who have been vaccinated as a result of these efforts that started in a very intensive way quite a few weeks ago. Because we recognize the fact that these people are particularly vulnerable.

John Tory:

One of our principles from the beginning has been to make sure that the most vulnerable people, whether because of age or because of their living circumstances, or because of past health history, or a

variety of other things, got vaccinated as a priority matter. And so, we've been quite actively engaged in that, and as I reported a moment ago, I think some 7,500 have been done so far, including the staff that helped care for them. So that gives you a bit of an inkling of what we've been doing and continue to do because it's a campaign that continues up to this day and maybe I'll turn it over to either the Chief or to the doctor to fill in some blanks that I left.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Well, Mr. Mayor, you didn't leave very many blanks. I would say this that over and above the efforts that we have put together in concert with our healthcare partners, I do know that a number of clinics in and around the city...hospital-based clinics, the mobile and pop-up clinics all around the city, our indigenous health service providers, community health centers, and pharmacies, and family physicians, primary care offices that have participated in the vaccine campaign...they have all also been part and parcel of the efforts to ensure that those who are experiencing homelessness or under housing are getting opportunities to get vaccines. So it is certainly a team effort, and one that we are continuing to push forward with.

Matthew Pegg:

Brad, it's Chief Pegg, I'll just add one more point. And thank you very much for this question. This is one of the things that we have been working nonstop on, and I'm really proud of the team for the strategy that's been put together and for the continuous commitment that is ongoing. We have a team of people that we refer to as our Streets to Homes team that are active in supporting and outreach and just overall wraparound supports for many different communities and certainly some of our most vulnerable residents that are experiencing homelessness. They are working literally day and night alongside our mobile vaccine teams who are active in providing a number of supports, one of which is the ready and uninhibited access to vaccine.

Matthew Pegg:

The other thing you may be interested in is, we have significantly expanded and have dedicated teams of people now working on enhanced infection prevention and control measures in all of our shelters. And that has been ongoing from the start and continues. And that is our continuing effort to ensure that all of our shelters are absolutely safe and that they continue to be supported throughout all of the challenges of COVID. So those are other elements that are part of the strategy that will certainly continue. I really appreciate the question. Thank you.

Brad Ross:

Thank you all. Thank you for that question. It is an important one. Absolutely. We're going to go next to Dave from Scarborough. Dave, welcome to this telephone Town Hall. What's your question, please?

Dave:

Well, thank you. I want to start by commending the work you guys are all doing and leading us through what is really kind of a no-win situation. In particular, Dr. De Villa and the medical people leading us through this, you guys are doing a great job. So my wife and I have a newborn, and obviously she's not going to be able to be vaccinated for a long, long time. And what we're wondering is, once us and our family and close friends are fully vaccinated, what's the recommendation as far as how to proceed, because I don't think it's realistic to keep her isolated forever. So at what point can we have her just sort of live a regular life?

Brad Ross:

Good question Dave.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Yeah, it's a great question, Dave. And there's no question, I think there are lots of people out there in the community and in fact, all over the world who are eager to get back to something that looks more like regular life. And let me also add congratulations on a newborn it's a lovely time in your life, and I would encourage you to enjoy it and savor it fully. At this point in time, what advice will be given by our provincial counterparts as they move forward with the reopening plan and what can be done and what is allowed for fully vaccinated versus non-vaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals is not quite out there yet, but I know it is something that is being actively discussed and should be out there very, very shortly. So when we get information that's ready for public dissemination, we'll be sure to share that information.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

I'm sure the province will also be putting it out. It will be their advice. And I know that we're all looking forward to that time. The final comment I would make is that it's my understanding that the vaccine manufacturers are in fact, doing studies in respect of the safety and the evaluation of the COVID-19 vaccines. They've now gotten approval, at least with the Pfizer for now, for that 12 to 17 year old age group. There are ongoing studies with respect to those who are less than 12 years of age. And if I remember correctly, those studies go down to those as young as six months of age. So do stay tuned. We're hoping that we'll get some really positive results from those studies and investigations, so that we'll be able to provide protection amongst the youngest in our community. So do stay tuned both on the advice for what we can do on the go forward and what we hear in respect of vaccines for children younger than the age of 12.

Brad Ross:

Thank you Dr. de Villa and thank you for the question, David. Let me echo the doctors congratulations on your newest family member. Next question, we'll go to Vivian in Midtown, who I believe has a question about the Johnson and Johnson vaccine business. Vivian go ahead, please. You're live. And welcome.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Hi.

Vivian:

Hi. Thank you for taking my call.

Brad Ross:

You're welcome.

Vivian:

I'm one of the individuals that has not been anxious to run out and be vaccinated because nobody is really saying what the vaccine promises you. Even Dr. de Villa earlier on the second question says what it's showing, but not what has been promised. And there hasn't been any evidence on how being

vaccinated protects others, because I understand you can still get COVID when you're vaccinated. So of all of the vaccines, my husband and I have favored the Johnson and Johnson one more than the others if we were to be vaccinated. So I'd like to know whether it's been deemed to be safe here in Canada. And if so, where and when would it be available?

Brad Ross:

Thank you for the call Vivian. Dr. de Villa?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So Vivian, thank you for the question. First and foremost, you talked about COVID when vaccinated and expressed a little concern around that. It does happen, but it is significantly reduced. In fact, the experience here in Ontario has been that it's been incredibly rare. I think if I've got my numbers, right, it was 0.06%. So it was incredibly unusual for that to happen. And when it does happen, the studies that we have to date suggests that if you're fully vaccinated and you get COVID, you tend to have a lower viral load and therefore are less likely to transmit to other people as a result. So you're less likely to have a serious outcome with illness even if you do get infected and you are less likely to transmit the disease to other people. In respect of the Johnson and Johnson also known as the Janssen vaccine that has been approved for use. However we have at this point, no line of sight in respect of when we might actually get that product for use here on the ground.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

As per an earlier answer provided by Chief Pegg, the federal government procures vaccine, they in turn distribute it to the provincial governments and then the province then distributes it out to a local public health units and municipalities. And at this point in time, we've not received any of that vaccine nor do we have a line of sight as to when we might actually anticipate receipt of the vaccine. But I would encourage you, Vivian, the vaccines that are available now are effective. They've been approved for use in Canada by Health Canada, they're safe, they're effective and they're one of the best things that all of us can do to protect ourselves and to protect our community.

Brad Ross:

Excuse me. Thank you, Dr. de Villa and thank you Vivian for the question. We're going to go to Harsha, who has a question online. And the question reads, the gap between the first and second dose of vaccination is 16 weeks while I came across many articles that indicate the gap shouldn't exceed four to six weeks. But having huge gaps between the two doses would work? I guess the question maybe Dr. de Villa is a longer interval, more effective? What would your answer be there for Harsha?

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So, yes, Brad, when it comes to vaccines and for Harsha, thank you, it's an excellent question. When it comes to vaccines, really the issue, especially when they are multi dose or vaccines that require more than one dose to be given. The concern that we have in general is actually around spacing the doses too close to each other, having dose two come too soon after dose one, rather than the other way around. And in fact, there are an increasing number of studies that are showing that the antibody response... that's your body actually produces these protective factors, antibodies, in response to the vaccine is a natural process in your body that when you're exposed to an agent of disease or to a vaccine, which is meant sort of mimic that, or at least in this case, the vaccines give your body, the capacity to make the



spike proteins so that you're able to recognize. Your body can recognize what COVID-19 is and develops antibodies to protect you from it.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

We find that in general, what you want to see is a sufficient space between that first and second dose. And we're finding that the antibody response is better when it's 12 weeks between that first and second dose compared to something as short or three as three or four weeks between the first and second dose. So in general, with the vaccine, we're more concerned and we're worried that the response isn't as good, if the doses are too close to each other, rather than being spaced apart by something like 12 or 16 weeks. And in fact, with some vaccines, it goes out as far as six months before you get the second dose. So, I would encourage people again, do go get that vaccine, follow the advice in respect of when to get the second dose, do make sure you get that second dose, because again, you are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 if you have only one out of two doses onboard. And I'll send it back to you Brad.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Thank you, Dr. de Villa, and we'll go next to Felly in Scarborough. Felly go ahead. You're live and welcome to the town hall.

Felly:

Oh, Hi. Thank you very much, Brad. Hi Dr. de Villa, it's Felly Fernandez calling. I would like to direct my questions to you. You had mentioned that June 19 will be the exact date or the new date for those people who are having first dose last April 1st to 18 at that age of seven- [inaudible 01:22:53]. My question is I have a schedule of July 28. Should I go on June 19 or just follow my schedule on July 28, which is going to Scarborough Centennial College.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

So thank you Felly for the question. So as far as I'm concerned, the most important thing right now is to get that second dose. And what has happened in the provincial system is that they have allowed for that second dose to get pulled up, come up a little bit earlier. So for remind me again, you got your first dose when?

Felly:

And then the second dose will be July 28.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

Sorry but your first dose date. I'm sorry. I didn't hear that.

Felly:

April seven, Ma'am. Dr. de Villa.

Dr. Eileen de Villa:

April 7th. Okay. Yeah. So according to the provincial schedule, if you received your first dose between March eight and April 18th, you will be eligible to book your second dose appointment earlier as of June 28th. So that means you can then get into the system and call and try to book an earlier appointment for

your second dose starting June 28th. It doesn't mean you can get it that day. You'll have to try and book an appointment, but your eligibility to book that second dose at an earlier time starts on June 28th.

Brad Ross:

Okay. Thank you Dr. de Villa. Felly thank you so much for the call. We are coming to the end of tonight's town hall, and we do have one last poll question for you. We're going to be hosting a number of events like this all summer, and we'd love to hear from you. So our last poll question is, do you feel like your knowledge of the city of Toronto's vaccination campaign has increased after this telephone town hall? Press one on your phone if yes. You feel like you know more about how to get vaccinated as a result of what you've heard from our speakers tonight. Press two on your phone if you feel like you know about the same as you did before the event. And press three on your phone, if you're not sure. John Tory, I'm going to turn it over to you for some final remarks and overall impressions of what you heard tonight.

John Tory:

Well Brad, thank you. And first of all, may I thank you for doing such a great job as the moderators tonight.

Brad Ross:

Oh thank you.

John Tory:

And I want to say thank you as well to my colleagues, Dr. de Villa and Chief Pegg. These are professionals. I can assure you ladies and gentlemen, that we are so lucky to have working at the City of Toronto. That was true before the pandemic, but I've had a chance, certainly firsthand, to see that the kind of calm, steady professional expertise of Dr. de Villa and the incredibly organized ability that chief Pegg has to put things in place like our vaccine clinics and a lot of the vaccine program, and many other things associated with what has been an unprecedented emergency for our city has been extraordinarily impressive. I think you would be impressed if you were to see it firsthand as I do. And you would recognize that I'm telling you the absolute truth when I say how lucky we are to have two professionals like that.

John Tory:

I should make mention there's a sort of a gang of four that does a lot of this. There're thousands of people, of course, that we work with every day. Some inside the city government, some outside and the health partners and so on. But Counselor Joe Cressy is the chair of the Board of Health and he works with us every day too. And so I want to thank them, but I mostly want to thank you. First of all, for coming out and spending the time with us tonight, because I, I hope that it will help in the overall effort, but most of all, I hope that it'll make you feel more comforted and more informed and better able to make your own decisions for yourself, but also maybe to help others.

John Tory:

We had the one call where somebody said they were talking to a friend who was asking questions and hopefully a session like this will allow you to convey some of this information about the safety of the vaccines, about the extent of the programs that we're offering to help people who need a bit of support in one way or another. All of those things I hope have been conveyed to you here tonight.

John Tory:

And just to remind you of two things, one is you can always go to [toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19) and find information there. Almost everything that we've talked about tonight is there in some form or other. And of course, we've set up the new texting feature, which allows you to text the word vaccine, V-A-C-C-I-N-E to 1-833-750-0888.

John Tory:

The last thing I want to just say is this. I want to thank you as well for the fact that a while I know it's been difficult and there have been moments when we've all seen things going on that maybe caused us to shake our head a little bit at some people who found the frustration to be a bit overwhelming for them and were doing some things that weren't necessarily in compliance with public health guidelines. But you know, it's better to look... when we live in a great place like this, of the glass as being 99% full. And we've had such good cooperation from people and it's caused such pain for some of them in the context of either being lonely or being unable to open their business, or being able just to go about sort of their way of life, that is something they're accustomed to, and that's caused great stress and strain for people, financial stress and strain and mental health issues and so on.

John Tory:

But people have come through and while we're not done yet, we are seeing dramatically improved numbers. We are seeing a roadmap the province has put out to help us with the reopening that can happen over the next number of weeks. And so what we have to do in the meantime is the same old things, which is number one, to continue to follow the public health guidelines, which are pretty simple and straightforward. And if you don't know them by now, it's mostly about keeping distance. It's mostly about avoiding kind of crowd scenes with people you don't live with. It's about wearing masks and it's about hygiene and making sure that you keep your hands washed and so on. And these are things that have been said since the beginning, but they actually do work.

John Tory:

And then the second thing of course is to get vaccinated. If you haven't yourself get fully vaccinated, you heard Dr. de Villa explaining that earlier on that you won't be fully vaccinated until you've had the both doses and some weeks to pass after the second one. And we're here to help you with that.

John Tory:

And to make sure you help. This is the other answer that Dr. de Villa gave better than I could have earlier on, but the best way you could help, if you want to volunteer, without having to sign up or go anywhere or joining an organization is just to talk to your friends and find out of your friends and have your relatives, especially the ones that are a bit older. If they haven't been vaccinated, find out why not, and help them with that. Help them with the information you've found out tonight, help them register, help them by giving them a ride. We have programs that do that as well. So you can get that information off [toronto.ca](https://toronto.ca) but help them, because if we can get that 70% number, which is a great number on the first doses, up to a really high and get the second dose number up just as high, we will be really in great shape.

John Tory:

And that's where we want to be. I want people to have hope. I want to get back to the life that we're so privileged to enjoy in the city. And, that'll take a lot of pain away from a lot of people. So thank you very much for being a part of this tonight. And thank you, Brad, for doing such a great job and back to you.

Brad Ross:

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And Mr. Mayor, thank you for your leadership throughout these last 14-15 months. It's been incredible. So thank you, sir. Thank you, Chief Pegg as well for your leadership and Dr. de Villa of course, for all of your wisdom and thank you all for joining us. If you press star zero to transfer to the provincial booking line, and haven't been able to transfer yet, I'm going to share with you now a phone number you can dial after this event is over. And that number is 1-833-943-3900. Again, that's 1-833-943-3900. That is the provincial bookings call center where you can book your first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and, or you can go to [toronto.ca/ COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19). Click on the blue book now button, and you can book online. This has been a terrific town hall, and I'm so glad that we were able to speak with so many of you tonight. So thank you once again, for being a part of tonight's event. As I say, please feel free to make [toronto.ca/ COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19) your first stop or any of your COVID-19 information. Please stay well, stay healthy and have a wonderful evening. Bye bye.