

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

March 10, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

Eglinton Court Mass Immunization Clinic

Good morning.

It's hard to believe that it has been nearly 14 months since we opened the first proof of concept COVID-19 mass immunization clinic at our Metro Toronto Convention Centre location.

Likewise, on March 17, 2021, we opened the doors to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Scarborough Town Centre and Toronto Congress Centre clinic locations, to residents 80 years of age and older, as the first public, COVID-19 mass immunization clinics commenced operations.

The network of City-operated COVID-19 vaccine clinics quickly expanded to 9, and these 9 clinics became the backbone of the Team Toronto COVID-19 vaccination effort that continues today.

Since then, more than 6.7 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered by Team Toronto, in what continues to be the largest mass immunization clinic operation in our history.

To each and every member of the team who has made these clinics a reality, including everyone at work in this clinic today, thank you will never be enough.

From the initial creation of our Immunization Task Force that led to the design and establishment of our vaccine clinic operations, through to our ongoing return to normal life in our city and the continuing removal of COVID-19 related restrictions that we are enjoying today, this has been an incredible journey.

I will forever be thankful for each and every person who stepped up to get this vital, life-saving work done.

To say that they have gone above and beyond the call of duty, is a profound understatement.

I will also forever be thankful for every Toronto resident, business owner and partner, who have done their part to beat COVID-19.

You have endured so much, and the success we are now seeing and enjoying is the direct result of all you have done.

I am pleased to report that, as the situation with COVID-19 continues to stabilize, we are continuing to scale back a number of aspects of our COVID-19 Incident Management System.

While our Emergency Operations Centre continues to be activated, and continues to provide support to Toronto Public Health and other City divisions, our team has also resumed a number of normal emergency planning and operational functions as well.

Effective March 15, I will formally transfer command of the City's COVID-19 Incident Management System, and leadership of our COVID-19 Strategic Command Team, to Office of Emergency Management Director Joanna Beaven-Desjardins.

Joanna is an experienced emergency responder, emergency planner and incident commander, and she is well positioned to lead this continuing work.

Joanna joined our team in May 2021, from her previous role as a senior officer with Toronto Police.

I will continue to directly support Joanna in her role as COVID-19 Incident Commander, and our COVID-19 Strategic Command Team as required.

Between March 15 and April 3, I will work with incoming Incident Commander Beaven-Desjardins and our Strategic Command team as we complete this transition.

Finally, I am thrilled to advise that I will resume my duties as Fire Chief, on Monday April 4, 2022.

Since being redeployed to the COVID-19 Incident Commander role in March 2020, each of our Deputy Fire Chiefs have stepped up to take on the Acting Fire Chief role.

Likewise, so many members of our team have stepped up alongside them, to ensure that we continue to deliver world-class fire protection and emergency management services without interruption.

I owe a debt of gratitude to each of these dedicated professionals for all that they have done, and all they continue to do.

I also thank each of our Office of Emergency Management team members for their continuing dedication, support and flexibility as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, I simply can't finish without acknowledging and thanking Dr. de Villa for her never-ending leadership, friendship, caring and support.

We began this mission, in 2019, as colleagues and stand here today, together, as friends.

I will have more to share about Dr. de Villa in due course, so for today, I will simply say thank you.

Likewise, I sincerely thank Mayor John Tory and every member of Toronto City Council, City Manager Chris Murray and the City's Senior and Corporate Leadership teams for their unwavering trust and confidence.

I never imagined that I would ever serve as the incident commander for something as massive, daunting and challenging as COVID-19, let alone a global public health pandemic, but it has been my honour to serve our City, our Council and our residents in this way.

From day one, our Incident Management System strategic priorities have been to save lives and to prevent our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed.

That has been our sole and unwavering objective for the past two years.

Finally, thank you to each of you, our media partners, and to Brad Ross and our City's Strategic Communications team, for being our connection to the more than 3 million residents in Toronto.

You each perform a vital role in public safety and I thank you all.

Most importantly, thank you Toronto.

You have shown the world what strength and grace under pressure looks like.

Thank you.