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## COO Health Sector

# WEEKLY COMMUNIQUÉ

**TO:** Ontario First Nation Leadership  
**FROM:** Tobi Mitchell, Director of Health.  
**DATE:** November 18, 2021  
**RE:** WEEK AT A GLANCE (NOVEMBER 8-12 2021)

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### COVID-19 Highlight of the Week: Children's Vaccines for those 5-11 years of age

Vaccinations for children ages 5 to 11 are not yet available in Canada. As with any other vaccine, COVID-19 vaccines for children (5-11) must undergo a rigorous review and approval process. This ensures all approved vaccines are effective and safe. There are five steps to vaccine approval, including: Research and Clinical Trials, Health Canada Approval, National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommendation, Provincial roll-out, where Ontario will consider Health Canada approval, NACI recommendations, Vaccine supply and logistics and Local COVID-19 disease patterns and cases, and then Ongoing Monitoring.

Health Canada's Chief Medical Advisor, Dr. Supriya Sharma, has indicated that the final review of the Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for children "between 5 to 11" should be completed within the next two weeks. Three weeks ago, Pfizer became the first company to seek Health Canada's approval for a pediatric COVID-19 vaccine. Other companies, including Moderna, are working on a children's formulation.

While children aged 12 and older are approved for the adult formulation of the vaccine, the pediatric formulation would be given in two smaller doses- 10mcg (micrograms), instead of the 30 mcg used for those over the age of 12. While the children's version of the vaccine is "slightly different" from the adult one, it contains the same mRNA and works the same.

Many Public Health Units in Ontario are developing plans to meet the needs of their geographic region in dispensing children's vaccines once approved.

Leadership, Technicians and Community members are asking many questions about the safety of the COVID-19 Pediatric vaccine and whether they should encourage children 5 to 11 years of age to receive it.

Once approval for the Pfizer Pediatric COVID-19 vaccine has been granted, the Chiefs of Ontario Health Sector, in subsequent communiques, will endeavor to gather and provide as much information as possible to assist in making this decision. We do know that being vaccinated against COVID-19 is the single greatest tool available to stop the spread of this virus and to protect others from serious harm.

## **SUMMARY COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTS: NOVEMBER 8-12**

### **Provincial Developments: (click on the link)**

Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Moore, announced Ontario is [pausing its plans to lift capacity limits in remaining high-risk settings](#) due to a recent rise in COVID-19 cases. Dr. Moore indicated that Ontario is seeing an increase in some key indicators, including the effective reproduction number, percent positivity and weekly case rates. As a result, the government is pausing the lifting of capacity limits in remaining higher-risk settings out of an abundance of caution.

The government and the Chief Medical Officer of Health will continue to monitor the data for the next 28 days to determine when it is safe to lift capacity limits in these settings.

Ontario's Science Advisory Tables provided an update on [the latest COVID-19 modelling data](#) that projected three potential scenarios: the lower range scenario projected that Ontario could see some 375 cases per day, in a more likely scenario, closer to 500 cases per day and under a worst-case scenario, Ontario could see over 600 cases per day in November.

Health Minister Elliott announced a [\\$12.4M investment to expand mental health and addictions support for frontline health care workers](#) in Ontario.

Public Health Sudbury & Districts' Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, has reinstated a number of [public health measures](#) to deal with the current outbreak of rapidly rising COVID-19 case counts in Greater Sudbury.

Long-term care workers had until Monday, November 15, to show proof of their first dose and must show proof of full vaccination by December 13. The latest government data shows 98% of LTC staff have received one dose, and 95% are fully vaccinated.

### **Analytics Related to Projections and Modelling:**

The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table and Modelling Consensus Table provided an update on the latest modelling data. The key findings were that:

- COVID-19 cases are rising in most Public Health Unit regions. Testing is flat, but positivity is rising in several Public Health Unit areas. This indicates a real rise in cases.
- Hospitalizations and ICU occupancy are stable right now, but overall occupancy of ICUs is likely to increase.
- The impact of COVID-19 remains highly inequitable. Those with lower income, essential workers, and minority groups are at highest risk.
- Vaccination remains the most effective protection against COVID-19 infection, hospitalization and long COVID-19, but there are critical gaps in coverage across communities.
- Experience in Europe and across Canada show that cases can rise quickly, with subsequent increases in hospital admissions, ICU occupancy, and deaths.
- A deliberate pause on re-opening is the right decision at this time. Policies that support wearing masks properly indoors and getting fully vaccinated will be helpful.

### **Perspectives of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health:**

- Dr. Moore said to “expect to see cases fluctuate or continue to increase over coming months,” as the weather gets cooler.
- He said current transmission is observed predominantly “among the younger age groups and the unvaccinated.” Spreading of the virus is happening mostly from the 20-39 age group; most transmission occurs in social settings where people take off masks and have close contact. Schools remain safe; there are low rates of transmission and high uptake of vaccination among 12-17 year olds.
- Asked what is driving the rapid, exponential growth of case rates in some health units, Dr. Moore stressed that the virus is spreading quickly in pockets of populations that are unvaccinated. He noted that this virus is spreading “in areas of the province that have had previous low levels of infection where the population had, perhaps, low immune protection through vaccination or natural infection.”
- Asked to comment on the government's plans to lift most restrictions at the end of March 2022, Dr. Moore said officials will reassess data in the second week of January to determine further removal of public health measures.
- Asked if the government will phase out old vaccine certificates as many people have been observed to forge paper-format certificates, Dr. Moore said he would recommend to the government “to move to the QR code as the means of verifying vaccination status,” if there is evidence of increased transmission in settings requiring certificates.

## **Federal Developments:**

### National Overview of Trends and Cases:

- Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Tam indicated that “it looks like we might be experiencing a bit of turbulence this week,” citing the easing of public health measures and cooler weather leading more people to spend time indoors.
- Over the past seven-days, an average of close to 2,500 new cases have been reported daily across Canada, an increase of 11% compared to the previous week.
- Currently, severe illness trends are stable, infection rates need to be kept down to prevent increases.
- On average, over 1,800 people with COVID-19 were being treated in hospitals each day, with 528 in intensive care units. Sadly, an average of 22 deaths were reported daily over the past seven days.
- Over 28 million people, or 85% of the eligible population aged 12 and older, are fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines. However, sizable gaps in vaccine coverage remain with over five million eligible people and over 4.3 million children under the age of 12 years being unvaccinated. This means total population coverage is about 10% lower, with over 74% of the Canadian population 48,179 confirmed positive COVID-19; including 3,446 in Ontario
- Chief Medical Advisor at Health Canada, Dr. Supriya Sharma, confirmed a decision on approval of Pfizer's pediatric vaccines is expected in one to two weeks.
- Health Canada has authorized the use of the [Pfizer](#) and [Moderna](#) COVID-19 vaccine as a booster shot.

### **Cases in Ontario:** (November 11, 2021, as of 10:30 a.m.)

- **Total number of cases:** 605,846 an increase of 598
  - 376 cases are in individuals who are not fully vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status and 222 are in fully vaccinated individuals.

Most newly confirmed cases are concentrated in six public health unit regions (e.g. 63 new cases in Toronto, 55 in Simcoe, 43 in Peel Region, 43 in Windsor, 37 in Durham and 37 in Ottawa)

So far, 146,508 cases of the B.1.1.17 (Alpha) virus variant have been reported, 1,503 cases of the B.1.3.5.1 (Beta) virus variant, 5,231 cases of the P.1 (Gamma) virus variant and 22,052 of the B.1.617.2 (Delta) virus variant.

**Resolved:** 591,525 (97.6%); an increase of 462

**Deaths:** Sadly, 9,921 people have died; an increase of 5 people.

**Hospitalizations:** 207 people were hospitalized, 158 are not fully vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status and 49 are fully vaccinated; 130 people in ICU, 121 are not fully vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status and 9 are fully vaccinated.

**Long-term care homes** (according to iPHIS): 2 active outbreaks; 0 active cases in residents; 6 active cases in staff; 3,824 deaths among residents and 13 among staff.

**Lab testing:** 19,290,043 completed; 30,230 people were tested yesterday with a positivity rate of 2.5%; 11,008 tests are currently under investigation.

**Vaccinations:** As of 8:00 p.m. yesterday, [22,681,696 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine](#) have been administered, including 13,468 doses yesterday; with a total of 11,126,663 people fully vaccinated. 88.6% of Ontarians 12+ have one dose and 85.3% have two doses.

**School cases:** As of Friday, [95 more individuals in schools tested positive from COVID-19](#), 985 cases within the last fourteen days and 4,545 cases reported more than fourteen days ago resulting in a cumulative total of 5,530 cases; 489 schools have reported a case and two schools have closed.

**Cases in Canada:** (November 10, 2021, as of 7 p.m.)

- Total number of cases: 1,740,005 an increase of 2,601
- Deaths: sadly, 29,249 people have died; an increase of 32
- Daily tests per 100,000 over last seven days: 229
- Percent Positivity: 2.9%
- Vaccinations: [59,419,049 in doses administered](#); more than 30,023,017 or 89.663% of eligible Canadians have received at least one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine; 28,612,121 or 85.449% of Canadians are fully vaccinated; and 783,911 third doses have been administered; 33,100 vaccine doses were administered today.
- In total, 64,945,796 doses of COVID-19 vaccines (including Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca) have been delivered to the provinces for administration. As of today, 91.5% of doses delivered to the provinces have been administered.