

Secretariat Office
468 Queen St St, Suite 400
Toronto, ON M5A1T7
Phone: (416) 597 1266
Fax: (416) 597 8365
1 877 517 6527



www.chiefs-of-ontario.org
www.chiefsmeeting.com
Facebook.com/ChiefsOfOntario
Twitter.com/ChiefsOfOntario
Youtube.com/ChiefsOfOntario
Instagram.com/ChiefsOfOntario

COO Health Sector WEEKLY COMMUNIQUÉ

TO: Ontario First Nation Leadership
FROM: Tobi Mitchell, Director of Health.
DATE: October 5th, 2021.
RE: WEEK AT A GLANCE (September 27th – October 1st, 2021)

Hello Chiefs,

COVID-19 Highlight of the Week:

Public Health Guidance for Thanksgiving Holiday

Last year, several regions in Ontario saw a late October spike in COVID-19 cases and attributed it to large gatherings held on Thanksgiving two weeks earlier. As many of us will be gathering with our families this weekend the Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr Moore advised everyone to follow some general principles over the Thanksgiving weekend.

If getting together with family and friends please make sure to screen individuals for active symptoms of COVID-19 prior to congregating inside. Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals are considered to be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and you may wish to ask those individuals to refrain from entering your home. Masking is still extremely important even for fully vaccinated people especially if you are near Elders, or residents of Long Term Care Homes or those who are medically compromised.

We also know that “outdoors is always better than indoors” so if possible please take advantage of outdoor spaces, and open windows and doors wherever possible. This will reduce the chances of any kind of transmission. Stay safe and protect your loved ones during this long weekend.

SUMMARY COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTS: SEPT 27-OCT 1st)

Provincial Developments

Provincial Developments:

- Ontario's COVID-19 Science Advisory Table released the latest modelling data. The Modelling Consensus Table outlined three potential scenarios:
 - The most-likely scenario, assuming no change in behaviour or policy, projects that Ontario could reach 1,500 cases by the beginning of November.
 - The best-case scenario, with a 25 percent reduction in transmission, projects case counts going well below 500 per day by November; and
 - The highly-unlikely worst-case scenario, with a 25 percent increase in transmission, projects more than 5,000 cases per day by the end of November.
- Health experts explained that while the fourth wave has flattened due to continued public health measures and vaccination, cases in children are increasing. They indicated that “there is a wide range for case projections” going forward, “reflecting the fragile situation and high degree of instability as colder weather approaches with more time indoors.”
- Ontario is making [COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory for all in-home staff, support workers, students, and volunteers](#) by November 15th. The Ministry of Long-Term Care will also be publicly posting [long-term care home staff vaccination rates](#).
- Ontario is [recommending the use of Pfizer over Moderna for vaccinating those aged 18 to 24](#) against COVID-19, due to an [observed increase in the very rare heart condition called pericarditis/myocarditis](#), mainly in young men.
- Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table's Clinical Practice Guideline Working Group published [a brief outline of evidence-based recommendations](#) on the use of Casirivimab + Imdevimab, and Sotrovimab for adults.
- Ontario launched a new [Workplace Safety Plan Builder](#) to make it easier for workplaces to create and update their safety plans.
- Labour Minister McNaughton said inspectors and other provincial offences officers, in consultation with local public health units, will continue conducting [inspection and education campaigns](#) to ensure businesses are following COVID-19 safety requirements.
- Lieutenant Governor of Ontario delivered a Speech from the Throne when the legislature convened on October 4th.

[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:

- New cases, hospitalizations and ICU occupancy are not increasing.

- Continued control over case growth requires high vaccination rates in the eligible population, continued public health measures, and a flattening of growth in mobility.
- The risk of contracting COVID-19, being hospitalized for COVID-19, and entering the ICU is several times higher for unvaccinated individuals. (e.g. a 7-fold higher risk of symptomatic COVID-19 disease, a 25-fold higher risk of being in the hospital and 60-fold higher risk of being in the ICU).
- Hospital and ICU occupancy have been stable for several weeks, however, a slow increase is expected over the next 30 days and a more rapid increase as the number of cases grows. ICU occupancy estimates vary from under 200 beds to over 300 beds by the end of October. Patients are expected to be younger in age.
- Vaccination coverage is increasing slowly.
- Post COVID-19 Condition – or Long COVID – will substantially impact the health of thousands of Ontarians.

Ontario Recommends the use of Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine for Individuals Aged 18-24 Years Old:

- Dr. Moore announced the government has made the decision to issue a preferential recommendation for the use of the Pfizer vaccine for individuals from aged 18 to 24 years old.
- The decision is made due to a small observed increase of pericarditis or myocarditis following vaccinations with Moderna compared with the Pfizer vaccine in this age group, particularly amongst males.
- He emphasized that these cases of adverse events after immunization are followed and referred to a specialist. The province hasn't seen any long-term complications as the vast majority of those impacted recover quickly.
- Dr. Moore noted that these conditions following vaccination remain rare and stressed that the benefits of vaccination continue to greatly outweigh the consequences of COVID-19.
- The rate of adverse events is around 2/100,000 (mild) cases associated with the vaccine, and 11/100,000 (moderate to severe) following infection by the actual virus.

Rapid Testing in Schools and Mandatory Vaccines for Children:

- Asked why the government was ordering agencies to stop supplying rapid tests to parents and community groups, Dr. Moore explained that the past program was intended for businesses and its application in school systems was not following the rules used by that program.
- He said the province is reviewing the best means of implementing an asymptomatic testing strategy for schools that will be risk-based.
- Asked about the province's plan for vaccinating kids aged 5-11 years old, Dr. Moore said the province is waiting for Health Canada to review the safety and

effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine and more details should be available in “the next couple of weeks.”

- Asked if COVID vaccines would be added to the list under the Immunization of Student Pupils Act (ISPA), Dr. Moore noted that ISPA mandates that individuals report whether they have been immunized for certain antigens – it doesn’t mandate vaccinations.
- He noted that in partnership with the Information Privacy Commissioner, the province has allowed the data that has the immunization information in the COVAX reporting tool to be shared with public health to ensure they’re aware who is/isn’t vaccinated in the event of a school outbreak.
- He indicated that mandates on COVID vaccines are unlikely until we get more information on safety and effectiveness.
- When Health Minister Elliott was asked if COVID vaccines would be added to mandatory vaccines for students, she said “we are going to take a look at anything that is going to protect people, including young people...that is one of the ways we're looking at.”

Ontario Introduces Mandatory Vaccination Policy in Long-Term Care:

- Long-Term Care Minister Philips announced that a new policy mandating vaccination for in-home staff has now become essential, and homes are now required to meet the following requirements:
 - Staff, support workers, students, and volunteers will have until November 15th to show proof that they have received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or to show proof of a valid medical exemption.
 - Staff who do not have all required doses or a valid medical exemption by the deadline will not be able to enter a long-term care home to work.
 - Newly hired staff will be required to be fully vaccinated before they begin working in a home unless they have a valid medical exemption.
 - Homes will begin randomly testing fully vaccinated individuals, including staff, caregivers and visitors, to help detect possible breakthrough cases of COVID-19 as early as possible.
- Minister Phillips confirmed a special care centre, mobile support teams and more personal support workers will be made available to address staffing concerns created by the potential loss of unvaccinated workers to ensure homes have enough staff to care for residents.
- The Minister also explained that this policy will not be universally applied to the healthcare sector, so an unvaccinated personal support worker may still be able to work in other settings outside of long-term care. (i.e. hospitals, home care)

Federal Developments:

- Health Minister Hajdu indicated that Health Canada is waiting for vaccine manufacturers to submit applications on vaccines for 5-11 year olds. She said, "as soon as we receive the data from the company the regulators are well-situated to rapidly review that data."

- Chief Medical Adviser at Health Canada, Dr. Supriya Sharma, has said she expects vaccine clinical trial data from Pfizer for 5-11 year olds early next week.
- Dr. Sharma confirmed that the Public Health Agency of Canada is reviewing [Merck and Co's interim data on the use of Molnupiravir](#) against COVID-19.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization released [updated guidance recommending an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine booster dose](#) be given to residents in long-term care and seniors in other congregate settings.

Federal Developments:

National Overview of Trends and Cases:

- Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Tam indicated that new surveillance data show ongoing regional variation in disease activity, but overall, epidemic growth in Canada appears to be stabilizing.
- Nationally, the average number of daily new cases reported is over 4,364, an increase of 1.2% over the previous week.
- On average, over 2,424 people with COVID-19 are being treated in Canadian hospitals each day, which is 8% higher than last week. This includes, on average, 791 people in intensive care units and, sadly, an average of 38 deaths are being reported daily.
- From mid-August to early September, the average weekly rate of new COVID-19 cases was 10 times higher, while the average weekly rate of hospitalizations was 38 times higher, in unvaccinated people than in fully vaccinated people

Cases in Ontario: (September 30th as of 10:30am)

- **Total number of cases:** 586,817 an increase of 668
 - 502 cases are in individuals who are not fully vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status and 166 are in fully vaccinated individuals

Most newly confirmed cases are concentrated in five public health unit regions (e.g. 110 new cases in Toronto, 65 in Peel Region, 55 in Ottawa, 55 in York Region and 43 in Windsor-Essex)

So far, 146,471 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, 5,230 cases of the P.1 (Gamma) virus variant and 18,622 of the B.1.617.2 (Delta) virus variant

Resolved: 572,105 (97.5%); an increase of 635

Deaths: sadly, 9,743 people have died; an increase of *11 persons

- 3 deaths occurred more than one month ago

Hospitalizations: 278 people were hospitalized, 250 are not fully vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status and 28 are fully vaccinated; 163 people in ICU, 156 are not fully vaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status and seven are fully vaccinated

Lab testing: 18,112,093 completed; 35,927 people were tested yesterday with a positivity rate of 1.8%; 14,067 tests are currently under investigation

Vaccinations: As of 8:00 p.m. yesterday, [21,809,713 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine](#) have been administered, including 29,704 doses yesterday; with a total of 10,558,963 people fully vaccinated

Nearly 86.3% of Ontarians 12+ have one dose and nearly 81.0% have two doses

As of Friday, [127 more individuals in schools tested positive from COVID-19](#), 1,624 cases within the last fourteen days and 658 cases reported more than fourteen days ago resulting in a cumulative total of 2,282 cases; 810 schools have reported a case and five schools have closed

Cases in Canada: (September 29th as of 7pm)

- Total number of cases: 1,620,137 an increase of 4,283
- Deaths: sadly, 27,819 people have died; an increase of 65
- Daily tests per 100,000 over last seven days: 283
- Percent Positivity: 4.1%
- Vaccinations: [56,302,354 in doses administered](#); more than 29,278,299 or 88.19% of eligible Canadians have received at least one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine; 27,024,055 or 81.40% of Canadians are fully vaccinated; 61,185 vaccine doses were administered today.
- In total, 64,341,614 doses of COVID-19 vaccines (including Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca) have been delivered to the provinces for administration. As of today, 87.5% of doses delivered to the provinces have been administered.