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COO Health Sector

WEEKLY COMMUNIQUE

TO: Ontario First Nation Leadership
FROM: Tobi Mitchell, Director of Health.
DATE: **October 26 2021**
RE: **WEEK AT A GLANCE (OCTOBER 18 – 22, 2021)**

Dear Leadership,

COVID-19 Highlight of the Week:

Vulnerable Elders in Congregate Settings and Elder Lodges: Part Two.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) released a statement on September 28, 2021 stating that: a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccines would be offered to Residents of Long-Term Care Homes (LTCH), Retirement Homes (RH), Elder Care Lodges, and elderly living in other congregate settings (e.g. assisted-living facilities, chronic care hospitals, naturally occurring congregate retirement settings/congregate senior's apartment buildings, etc.) to boost the primary COVID-19 vaccine series.

Planning is underway in many communities in Ontario for the administration of this third dose to all seniors. The Ministry of Health as well as Indigenous Services Canada have made assurances that all needed doses will be available.

Some health officials in other provinces, including Manitoba, are now recommending ALL First Nations living on reserve receive a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Planning is still ongoing in Ontario for the prioritization of First Nations for the third dose.

It continues to be strongly recommended that everyone coming in contact with Elders who reside in congregate care settings or their own homes, complete a full two dose vaccine series, and continue to follow public health measures.

Next Communique: Children's Vaccines for those 5-11 years of age

SUMMARY COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTS: Oct.18-22

Provincial Developments:

- Premier Ford has released a [plan to gradually lift remaining public health and workplace safety measures](#) in Ontario by March 2022. Capacity limits and physical distancing rules will be lifted for restaurants, bars and gyms as of Monday Oct. 25th.
- Ontario's Science Advisory Table released new [COVID-19 modelling data](#) that show case counts are projected to remain under 700 by the end of November in the worst case scenario and the best case scenario shows around 200 new cases by the end of November.
- Health Minister Elliott confirmed that all 34 of the province's public health units have now submitted plans to vaccinate children between 5-11 years old. These plans are currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Health.
- Ontario is investing over \$89M to deliver one of the largest immunization programs in the province's history, with the flu shot available to all Ontarians starting in November.
- Finance Minister Bethlenfalvy is expected to release Ontario's Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review on November 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:

- COVID-19 cases are declining in most public health units and hospitalizations and ICU occupancy are stable. The combination of vaccination and continuing public health measures is controlling this pandemic wave.
- Recent experience in other countries and Ontario modelling suggest that continuing some public health measures will help maintain control of the pandemic as other factors – such as cold weather – increase the risk of a growth in cases, hospitalizations and ICU occupancy.
- If Ontario adopts smart, tailored strategies – like working with children, parents, schools, and communities – a course for a strong immunization program in children can be set when the vaccine is approved in younger age groups.

[Ontario Releases Plan to Gradually Reopen:](#)

Here are the key dates included in the province's recently released *Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term*. The plan will be guided by the ongoing assessment of key public health and health care indicators and supported by local or regional tailored responses to COVID-19.

- **October 25:** Capacity limits will be lifted in the vast majority of settings where proof of vaccination is required, such as restaurants, gyms and casinos.
- **November 15:** Capacity limits in the remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required will be lifted. (e.g., night clubs, wedding receptions in meeting/event spaces where there is dancing).
- **January 17:** The province intends to begin gradually lifting capacity limits in settings where proof of vaccination is not required. The Chief Medical Officer of Health will also lift CMOH directives as appropriate.
- **February 7:** The government intends to lift proof of vaccination requirements in high-risk settings, including night clubs.
- **March 28:** Remaining public health and workplace safety measures will be lifted, including wearing face coverings in indoor public settings. Recommendations may be released for specific settings, if appropriate.

COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates for Ontario's Hospital Workers:

- As of October 22nd, 4.8 million Ontarians have downloaded their enhanced vaccine certificate, and one million people are using the Verify Ontario app.
- Asked about the Premier's letter to hospitals and health experts requesting input on vaccine mandates for healthcare workers, Health Minister Elliott indicated those responses are being reviewed and "we will make a decision very shortly with respect to the issue of mandatory vaccination."
- Contrary to the Premier's concerns that it could lead to staff shortages, Ontario's Science Advisory Table suggested the requirement for all hospital workers to be vaccinated "can enhance safety and reduce the risk of staffing disruptions due to COVID-19."

Federal Developments:

- Prime Minister Trudeau announced that [a standardized Canadian COVID-19 proof of vaccination is now available for travel](#). This standardized proof will support Canada's new traveller vaccination requirements that will come into effect on October 30th.
- Health Canada has received [a submission from Pfizer-BioNTech](#) to authorize the use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children 5 to 11 years of age.
- Prime Minister Trudeau confirmed the Canadian government is working directly with Pfizer to ensure that "we will have the supply necessary to vaccinate every child 5-11 years old once Health Canada approves the vaccine."
- Procurement Minister Anand confirmed that [Canada will receive 2.9 million doses of Pfizer's pediatric vaccine](#) shortly after it receives regulatory authorization by Health Canada.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization now recommends that [it is possible for people who experienced an immediate, severe allergic reaction after a first dose to safely receive future doses of an mRNA vaccine in a controlled setting](#) after consulting with an allergist or another appropriate physician about their situation.

- Finance Minister Freeland announced [new COVID-19 measures that will deliver targeted support to businesses](#) that are still facing significant pandemic-related challenges. She said federal support “needs to be more narrow, more targeted and less expensive. And we need to look forward to the day, now not too far off, when we will be able to bring it to an end entirely.”
- The Canada Recovery Benefit is set to expire October 23rd, and will be replaced with the new [Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit](#).
- The federal government has [lifted its advisory](#) to avoid all non-essential international travel.
- Effective Monday, November 22nd, [individuals must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to be allowed within the House of Commons precinct](#), including members of parliament and their staff.
- Former federal Employment Minister Qualtrough indicated during [a recent media interview](#) that individuals who lose their jobs for not complying with employer COVID-19 vaccine policies will likely not be eligible for employment insurance.

All Non-Essential Travel Advisories Lifted:

- Although the federal government lifted an advisory against all non-essential travel abroad, Dr. Tam cautioned that “now is not the time to freely go wherever,” stressing “the pandemic is very much alive. There are definitely still risks involved in travel.”
- Deputy Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Njoo advised Canadians to assess the “epidemiological situation” in the country they are planning to visit “because there is great variation between different countries and even within countries, as we’ve seen here in Canada.”
- Asked if officials would consider scrapping the mandatory PCR testing requirements for travellers that can cost upwards of \$200 to obtain, Dr. Tam explained that “many countries continue to require a pre-departure test, and it adds a layer of protection for any traveller – not just Canadians coming into Canada but travellers from any corner of the world, so it is something we will look at.”