



Huron Perth Public Health

Report of the Medical Officer of Health

May 7, 2021

Health Protection

COVID-19 Update

Ontario's total daily cases of COVID-19 continued to climb in April, reaching a peak of 4,812 Cases on April 12 and 41 deaths on April 29 (compared to a peak of 640 cases on April 24, 2020 and 86 deaths on April 30, 2020 in the first wave, and 4,249 cases on January 8 and 89 deaths on January 7 in the second wave).

On April 8, the province issued a province wide Stay-at-Home order, requiring everyone to remain at home except for essential purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services (including getting vaccinated), for outdoor exercise with your household in your home community, or for work that cannot be done remotely.

On April 12th, Ontario hospitals were instructed to ramp down all elective surgeries and non-emergent/non-urgent activities in order to preserve critical care and human resource capacity. Ontario also announced the decision to move elementary and secondary schools to remote learning following the April break, starting April 19th. Childcare for non-school aged children would remain open, before and after school programs would be closed and free emergency child care for the school-aged children of eligible health care and frontline workers will be provided

On April 16, Dr. Adalsteinn Brown, Co-Chair of the *COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Committee*, provided an update on the latest modelling data. He outlined three potential scenarios: the best-case scenario projected that Ontario could see 2,000 cases per day by late May with strong measures and a daily vaccination rate of 300,000; there would be 10,000 cases per day with the current measures in place and a daily vaccination rate of 100,000; and under a worst-case scenario, Ontario would see 30,000 cases per day by the end of May with weak measures and a daily vaccination rate of 100,000. The modelling data suggested the only way to flatten the curve is through a six-week stay-at-home order with a vaccination rate of 100,000 doses per day. On the same day, Premier Ford announced that the State of Emergency and Stay-At-Home order will be extended by an additional two weeks to May 19th, as well as a series of new restrictions and a plan to increase vaccinations by 25% in those hardest hit areas (i.e. in 13 public health regions).

On April 6th, the Ontario government moved into Phase Two of its COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan, with a focus on reaching individuals in "hot spot" communities where COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted certain neighbourhoods. Starting April 20, Ontario started offering the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to individuals aged 40 and over at pharmacy and primary care settings across the province, including 13 locations in Huron Perth as of the week of April 12 (and one in nearby Grand Bend). For a list of pharmacies currently offering COVID-19 vaccinations, please visit: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations>

On April 29, Ontario announced a ramp up of vaccination, based on the increased vaccine allocations Ontario is expecting in May, due to a predictable and increased vaccine supply from the federal government. Accordingly, the government has developed an anticipated schedule to expand eligibility to receive the COVID-19 vaccine throughout May, with individuals aged 18 and older eligible to book through the provincial booking system as early as the week of May 24, 2021.

As of April 30, HPPH reported a total of 1573 positive results (99 of which have screened positive for Variants of Concern (VOC)), with 31 active cases, 1 current hospitalization (63 total), 2 active cases in Health Care Workers (225 total) and 52 deaths. The Stratford General Hospital site of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance began accepting admissions from outside the region to assist with managing the demand on the provincial hospital system, in particular with regard to ICU beds.

Here is a snapshot of COVID cases and hospital capacity taken from the Ontario Health website on April 30:

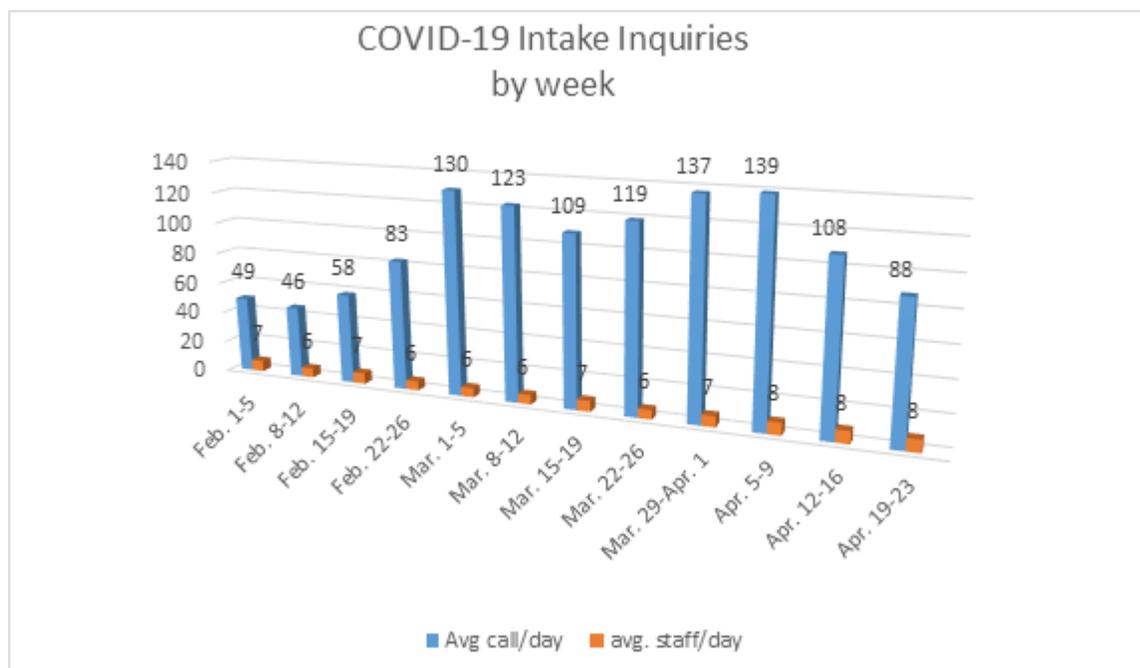
Snapshot

Page ➔ Data As Of:

LHIN	Master PHUs	COVID Response Level	Incidence (Weekly New Cases per 100k)	% Positivity (7d Avg - Interim Data)	ICU Occupancy	Acute Occupancy
01 ESC	Chatham-Kent HU	5 - Lockdown	35.7	2.52%	82%	83%
01 ESC	Lambton HU	5 - Lockdown	57.3	1.64%	71%	59%
01 ESC	Windsor-Essex HU	5 - Lockdown	86.9	6.63%	74%	77%
02 SW	Grey Bruce HU	5 - Lockdown	33.6	3.13%	78%	73%
02 SW	Huron-Perth HU	5 - Lockdown	22.9	1.36%	70%	66%
02 SW	Middlesex-London HU	5 - Lockdown	136.4	7.12%	95%	78%
02 SW	Southwestern PH	5 - Lockdown	59.6	3.51%	86%	78%
03 WW	Waterloo PH	5 - Lockdown	93.4	6.35%	78%	80%
03 WW	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph HU	5 - Lockdown	119.9	6.43%	74%	76%
04 HNHB	Brant HU	5 - Lockdown	142.4	5.46%	113%	96%
04 HNHB	Haldimand-Norfolk HU	5 - Lockdown	135.0	4.38%	63%	86%
04 HNHB	Hamilton HU	5 - Lockdown	156.2	6.34%	89%	95%
04 HNHB	Niagara HU	5 - Lockdown	224.6	8.98%	91%	86%

COVID Intake line is staffed by Public Health Nurses, Registered Dietitians, Public Health Promoters, and dental hygienists and educators. In total there are between five and nine staff responding to public inquires (through email, phone calls and voice mail messages) on a daily bases. Often the volume of inquiries reflect the local response to what is happening at the provincial level such as announcements or changes in the colour our region is designated. The volume is also highly influenced by our own announcements for vaccine availability and changes in vaccine eligibility.

The table below provides the average number of inquiries per day for each week (February; March and April). It also shows, a week at a time, the average number of staff supporting the intake line each day. Some weeks, the volume of inquiries are not able to be followed-up by the end of the day and may carry over into the next day. Over the three month period, the range of calls per day have ranged from 30 to 186 calls with the median being 105 inquiries in a day. In eight of the 12 weeks, each staff responded to between 14 to 22 inquiries a day. Some are easy to respond to, and require little time but most are more complex and take significant time to provide a response.



Generally, inquiries are about the following topics but are not limited to these topics:

- Asking about COVID-19 symptoms
- Vaccine inquiries such as seeking clarity about specific eligibility; booking vaccine and side-effects
- Business inquiring about rapid tests; inspections and public health measures
- Calls about schools; parents seeking clarification about a letter they received re: a school case and their role; being a household member; going to work when their child is ill
- Provincial framework and seeking clarification about the colour zone; asking about an event
- Variant of Concern and asking about additional requirements
- Travel questions
- Previous positive cases with new symptoms
- Seasonal question about an event, sports etc.

These totals do not include email and calls that are sent directly to our Environmental Health and Communications teams.

HPPH is now displaying its vaccination coverage information on a separate dashboard available on our website page [COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage Dashboard](#). This is not a real-time tool, but is meant to keep the community informed on vaccine administration and coverage. 5,139,984 vaccine doses have been administered in Ontario as of April 30. In Huron Perth, the vaccine program continues to move through Phase 2 populations although not as rapidly as in some regions. Part of the reason for that may be high uptake in eligible populations. In total, as of April 29:

46,791 doses have been administered in Huron Perth by HPPH, Primary Care and Pharmacies

50,129 total doses have been administered to Huron Perth residents:

Coverage of at least one dose (%)

80+ yrs = 94.2

75 – 79 = 91.2

70 – 74 = 90.3

65 – 69 = 69.2

60 – 64 = 43.8

55 – 59 = 36.8

16 – 54 = 13.8

TOTAL = 38.0 (2 doses = 3.3%)

According to the PHO Surveillance Report. **COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake in Ontario: Apr 11, 2020 to Apr 17, 2021**

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/epi/covid-19-vaccine-uptake-ontario-epi-summary.pdf?la=en>

% coverage	ON	HPPH
At least one dose	23.5	24.5
2 doses	2.4	3.0
Total # doses	3,148,080	35,575

Population includes entire population

There are no facility or school outbreaks at this time, and one workplace outbreak.

The Environment Team is providing support to our community to comply with the new Lockdown measures as outlined in *Ontario Regulation 82/80 Rules for Areas in Stage 1* (consolidated April 19) found

here: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200082>

The team is also managing an increasing number of workplace outbreaks.

The Health Equity team is leading the Urban Indigenous Outreach. Indigenous adults 16+ have been eligible for vaccination for several weeks, with their household members recently becoming eligible. While HPPH does not have any organized Indigenous communities in our borders, we have done intentional outreach to Indigenous peoples in Huron and Perth counties through several groups: Indigenous Working Group (mostly Huron County and Perth reps, including the school boards and The Local); Indigenous Talking Circle; as well as sending HP updates to Metis Nation of Ontario and the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre for further distribution to their HP members.

The Anabaptist Needs assessment was completed. While there is variation among the different groups, in general there is a need to build more vaccine confidence and that planning is underway, and will likely consist of zoom or in-person (when permissible) meetings with leaders to provide information and answer questions.

The communications team's continues to support all aspects of COVID-19 vaccination efforts (eligibility, bookings, on-site clinic communications). Messaging is distributed through multiple mass communication platforms (online, print, radio, etc.) as well as stakeholder meetings and individual replies to phone calls, emails and social media messages from Huron-Perth residents.

The communications goals of the HPPH Vaccine Implementation Plan are:

- Ensure the community is informed;
- Provide timely reliable information to partners and public;
- Promote public confidence in the public health system and vaccines.

As vaccination efforts intensify, we are grateful for the ways our partners have been supporting these goals. HPMVAC primary care representative and St. Mary's physician, Dr. Gilmour, filmed a series of short videos with us about COVID-19 vaccinations, which have been very popular on our social media platforms. The Huron and Perth area Ontario Health Team has generously agreed to be lead funder on a HPPH/OHT vaccine confidence project with a local video company. In addition, municipal leaders have shared "vaxxies" (photos taken in front of our COVID-19 vaccination selfie station) on their municipal social media accounts, which we have shared as well.

Communications also continues to assist in providing and refining HPPH messaging related to other aspects of COVID-19 response. In April, aspects of COVID-19 response (non-vaccine) requiring increased messaging included:

- Provincial shutdown and stay-at-home order
- Return to at-home learning
- Workplace support and Temporary Foreign Worker support

The communications team continues to encourage kindness, patience and cooperation in all messaging.

COVID has created many challenges and frustrations for Huron Perth residents, organizations and businesses. Our COVID Intake phone line has been fielding calls for over a year and many include callers who are expressing their frustrations. However, we also get positive feedback and it is important to acknowledge those as well. Here are some samples:

From HPPH staff working the COVID Intake Phone line: I just spoke with a caller to COVID Intake who called with vaccine related questions. At the end of our discussion, she had some kind words about the work that HPPH is doing, specifically around communications and vaccine clinics. She said that she feels HPPH is doing a great job at communicating information to the public - the information is timely and straightforward. She added that the website is well organized and full of helpful information. She explained that she has helped family members in different regions of the province look for information and book vaccine appointments on various HU websites and that the HPPH site, in her experience, is by far the easiest one to navigate.

From an organization: We now have everyone that we support vaccinated with their first dose. We wondered if you would be able to express our thanks and gratitude to the amazing staff at the vaccination clinic in Goderich. They were so accommodating and supportive administering the vaccine to the people we support. They did not hesitate to accommodate our request to administer the vaccine in the vehicle and they were so friendly.

From a local business: I am writing to thank you, and your team, very much for all of the support that you have provided to both us over the past few months. I cannot imagine the stress that your team is under, yet they have always been helpful (and even cheerful) when we required COVID-19 related support or advice.

From a member of the public: I attended the vaccination clinic on Wednesday – and I was truly impressed by the efficiency, the sense of order and the friendliness of the professional staff and the volunteers. My wife and I left home at 10 minutes before our appointment and we were home again 40 minutes later. Impressive.

At this time, HPPH staff have accrued > 24,243 hours of overtime in the pandemic response.

Health Promotion

In April, a HPPH Senior Public Health Promoter was a panelist in Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health's monthly lecture series speaking to the topic of "Healthy Rural Communities: Linking Municipalities, Planning and Health Outcomes". In this lecture, Dr. Wayne Caldwell from the University of Guelph talked about some of the innovative practices that make

healthy rural communities, highlighting excerpts from the Healthy Rural Communities Toolkit. HPPH staff highlighted the local community development work being done by Destination Prosperity as an innovative practice to link municipalities, planning and health outcomes and suggested community development is an important approach to consider using in the implementation of municipal Community Safety and Well-Being Plans.

On April 21st in collaboration with community partners, HPPH participated in a virtual town hall event called Huron-Perth Community Partner Open House Topic: Opioids and Addictions. The event was streamed live on the West Region OPP Face Book site and remains available for viewing <https://www.facebook.com/OPPWest/videos/4380405118660341/>. Within 48 hours after the evening event, the video had been viewed over 7.4K times! The event was moderated by Derek Rogers, OPP and the expert panel included the MOH and a Public Health Nurse from HPPH, Robin Spence Haffner from Choices for Change, Detective Constable Chris Auger from OPP, and John Steffler from Tanner Steffler Foundation. The panel provided information about opioids and additions, how to access supports in Huron and Perth and included an interactive question and answer portion for viewers to get their questions answered. The event was the creative visioning of Sgt Scott Bentley from Perth OPP who along with the other collaborating partners are currently not able to provide in-person sessions with students or in the community due to COVID restrictions. Conveying this information is important, as deaths related to opioid and substance use has increased across the province and Huron and Perth counties since 2017.

West Region OPP Face Book:

<https://www.facebook.com/OPPWest/videos/4380405118660341/>

Respectfully submitted by Dr Miriam Klassen, MOH & CEO