



# Huron Perth Public Health

## Report of the Medical Officer of Health

September 3, 2021

### Health Protection

#### COVID-19 Update

Provincial COVID-19 infection rates, hospitalizations and deaths declined in the summer but infection rates have been increasing again over the last month.

The Provincial stay-at-home order and state of emergency ended June 2, 2021, and the government released its "Roadmap to Reopen" expecting to enter Step one the week of June 14, dependent on the province-wide vaccination rate and improvements in public health and health system indicators.

For the time between the stay-at-home order ending and Step one of the reopening plan beginning, the province remained under the provincial 'emergency brake' (also referred to as Shutdown in Ontario Regulation 82/20), and Public Health Measures (PHMs) and restrictions remained in place (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario>). Schools also remained closed for the rest of the school year.

With falling infection rates and meeting the vaccination target (at least 60% of adults with one dose), the government moved the province into Step 1 of its Roadmap to Reopen at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, June 11, 2021.

As of June 23, over 76 per cent of the population in Ontario ages 18 and over had received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and over 29 per cent had received their second dose, with more than 13.3 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine administered province-wide. The Province announced it would move the province into Step Two of its *Roadmap to Reopen* on June 30, 2021, ahead of schedule, due to continuing improvement in key public health and health care indicators and with the province-wide vaccination rate surpassing the targets outlined (at least 70 per cent of adults with one dose and 20 per cent with two doses for at least two weeks).

On July 9th, the province announced Ontario would be moving into Step Three of its reopening plan on Friday July 16th. The scientific director of Ontario's Science Advisory Table, Dr. Peter Juni warned that Ontario is "absolutely not" ready to enter into Step Three due to the spread of the Delta variant.

Dr Tam (Canada's Chief Public Health Officer), shared National COVID-19 transmission modelling data (attached) on July 30, indicating that "we've made tremendous progress both in reducing COVID-19 disease activity and increasing vaccination coverage," and noting "this has enabled the lifting of many public health restrictions across the country, but ... that comes with some expected increases in daily case counts." Further, she stated that the long-term epidemic forecast "suggests we are at the start of the Delta driven fourth wave, but that the trajectory will depend on ongoing increase in fully vaccinated coverage and the timing, pace and extent of reopening."

Data from Public Health Ontario's *Surveillance Report. COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake and Program Impact in Ontario: December 14, 2020 to August 14, 2021* <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/epi/covid-19-vaccine-uptake-ontario-epi-summary.pdf?la=en> shows that an estimated 37,408 cases of COVID-19 amongst individuals 18 and over have been prevented to date, due to the direct effects of Ontario's vaccination program. A further 2,759 hospitalizations or deaths have been prevented in individuals 70 years of age and older. Despite the effectiveness of the province's vaccine program, approximately 2 in 10 eligible Ontarians have not received a single dose of a vaccine and 1.8 million Ontarians need a second dose.

On August 16th, the province announced that municipalities and Indigenous community partners will receive an additional \$307M to help deliver critical services, create longer-term housing solutions and keep people safe.

On Aug 17, Dr. Moore announced a new policy that will make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory in high-risk settings, including healthcare and long-term care sectors, beginning September 7th. The policy will require routine testing for those who refuse to get vaccinated. Ontario also announced it would start to provide third doses of the COVID-19

vaccine to select vulnerable populations, and also expanded eligibility for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to all youth who were born in 2009 or earlier. As of August 15th, more than 69 percent of youth aged 12 to 17 have received a first dose and 56 percent have received a second.

On August 20, Ontario recorded 650 new COVID-19 infections, the highest number since early June. Dr. Moore announced the government had paused the province's exit from the *Roadmap to Reopen* and Ontario would remain in Step 3. Additionally, Ontario announced it would invest \$47 million in one-time mitigation funding to help public health units stop the spread of COVID-19. Ontario also announced its intention to implement a mandatory vaccine policy that requires provincial public servants to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or face regular testing to return to their workplaces. Those unable to provide a medical exemption must complete an education session.

Ontario has a new website with vaccination data. The province updated its vaccine data website recently to include new ways of viewing important COVID-19 information, including:

- The vaccination status of positive COVID-19 cases, as well as those in hospital and ICU, based on all cases reported the previous day,
- Daily graphs and tables on the progress of vaccine administration,
- The number of people vaccinated by age group,
- The number of first and second doses administered,
- Hospitalizations,
- Case numbers and spread,
- Testing volumes and results,
- Likely sources of infection, and
- Long-term care homes

On Aug 24, with over 82 per cent of eligible Ontarians aged 12 and over having received one dose of the vaccine and 75 per cent having received both doses, the government announced ongoing efforts to support the province's 'last mile strategy'; the province and public health units are focusing on smaller, community-based and easy-to-access settings for vaccinations.

Huron Perth enjoyed relatively low rates of COVID-19 over the summer months. As of Aug 27, HPPH is reporting 2,013 total cases, 21 active cases, 0 hospitalizations and 57 deaths. At the time of this report, there are 2 outbreaks; one community outbreak and one Long-Term Care Home outbreak (Knollcrest Lodge in Milverton with 4 staff cases and 4 resident cases).

Here is a snapshot of COVID cases and hospital capacity taken from the Ontario Health website on Aug 25:

Snapshot					
Page →					
LHIN	Master PHUs	Incidence (Weekly New Cases per 100k)	% Positivity (7d Avg - Interim Data)	ICU Occupancy	Acute Occupancy
01 ESC	Chatham-Kent HU	31.0	3.02%	86%	106%
01 ESC	Lambton HU	15.3	1.21%	64%	74%
01 ESC	Windsor-Essex HU	93.9	7.72%	71%	87%
02 SW	Grey Bruce HU	13.0	1.75%	61%	91%
02 SW	Huron-Perth HU	17.2	1.56%	55%	80%
02 SW	Middlesex-London HU	43.0	3.24%	80%	88%
02 SW	Southwestern PH	12.3	1.25%	70%	87%
03 WW	Waterloo PH	20.7	2.10%	68%	85%
03 WW	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph HU	19.6	1.98%	88%	94%
04 HNHB	Brant HU	33.5	2.92%	75%	100%
04 HNHB	Haldimand-Norfolk HU	25.4	2.33%	63%	99%
04 HNHB	Hamilton HU	79.0	6.66%	78%	96%
04 HNHB	Niagara HU	21.6	2.84%	68%	87%

As of Aug 26, 2021 (end of day), 189,308 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Huron Perth by HPPH, Primary Care and Pharmacies. A total of 102,014 1<sup>st</sup> and 93,459 2<sup>nd</sup> doses have been delivered to Huron Perth residents with a Coverage of at least one dose in population 12 + years (%)

Population	Aged 12 years +
% with 1 dose	79.8
% with 2 doses	73.1

Many staff were redeployed to this massive undertaking (administering approximately 12,000 doses per week at its peak). This is an unprecedented mass vaccination program response and was greatly aided by the incredible collaboration with partners across the health, municipal and volunteer sectors. Currently, the program is transitioning to a more targeted approach, and eventual normalizing, as a routine part of Ontario's *Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule*.

Staff continued to provide management for Cases, Contacts, and Outbreaks, and provide support and enforcement of the *Roadmap to Reopen*. The School Team is preparing for school re-openings in accordance with updated Ministry of Education guidance and with additional recommendations from myself as MOH. The Facilities Response Team has prepared a comprehensive plan to support Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes to strengthen Infection Prevention and Control and increase staff vaccination rates, and will continue to work with individual facilities in the coming weeks. The Section 22 for Temporary Foreign Workers was updated. Work is underway to update HPPH Public Health Instructions and recommendations for the fall.

The communications team continues to focus on supporting vaccination rollout as well as "return to school" communications and communications about changing public health guidance and restrictions.

Communications needs around vaccination rollout currently include:

- Promoting vaccination opportunities across Huron-Perth, especially HPPH clinics and pop-up clinics
- Local youth campaign
- Celebrating vaccination milestones, in order to document the vaccination rollout in Huron-Perth as well as support vaccine confidence campaigns.

Messaging continues to be distributed through multiple mass communication platforms (online, print, radio, etc.), stakeholder communications, and individual replies to phone calls, emails and social media messages from Huron-Perth residents. The communications team is very thankful for the many municipal and community partners who have been sharing and promoting information about where to get vaccinations.

Staff were also encouraged to take well earned summer vacations, so our staffing has been relatively leaner over the summer. At this time, HPPH staff have accrued > 41,399.51 hours of overtime in the pandemic response.

## Recovery Planning

While case rates were lower, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) spent some time on Recovery Planning, hoping to transition out of Incident Management System at the end of September. However, given the changing context, this has been delayed until at least October 31, and will be reassessed in one month. The SLT did participate in an Association of Local Public Health Agencies of Ontario (alPHA) survey intended to document a Public Health Program Deficits Assessment that can be used to inform future communications, including with the Ministry of Health.

## Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)

This year's Conference and Annual General Meeting *Ontario's Public Health System: Challenges – Changes – Champions* was held on June 8th, 2021, and focused on the critical role of Ontario's public health system. alPHA's members participated in a program that featured speakers who discussed Ontario's key public health issues, including the response to COVID-19.

The 2021 Disposition of alPHA Resolutions from this year's online conference and further information on alPHA's resolutions are available [here](#). alPHA's [Annual Report](#), recipients of alPHA's [Distinguished Service Awards for 2020 and 2021](#), detailed [bios](#) for speakers and other materials can be found on alPHA's [website](#). A presentation by alPHA's legal counsel, James LeNoury, on legal matters for Boards of Health can be found [here](#).

## Chronic Disease Prevention, Substance Use and Injury Prevention

The Special Advisory Committee on the Epidemic of Opioid Overdoses released the latest [national data on the overdose crisis](#) and [new modelling projections of the number of opioid-related deaths](#) that may occur over the course of the coming months. The results of the model suggest that, under some scenarios, the number of opioid-related deaths may remain high or may even increase through to December 31, 2021.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has published new information on [substance-related poisonings and homelessness](#) in Canada.

*Respectfully submitted by Dr Miriam Klassen, MOH & CEO*