



# Huron Perth Public Health

## Report of the Medical Officer of Health

November 5, 2021

### Health Protection

#### COVID-19 Update

The federal government shared updated COVID-19 modelling on October 8<sup>th</sup> ([Latest COVID-19 Federal Modelling Data](#)). The key messages from the modelling data are listed below:

- Nationally, daily COVID-19 case counts have slowed though severe outcomes, occurring primarily among the unvaccinated, are still elevated
  - Daily counts (average over past 7 days): 3,745 cases, 2,514 in hospital, 769 in ICU and, sadly, 8 deaths
- Although the Delta-driven wave has levelled off nationally, there is considerable regional variation and significant strain on the health system in heavily impacted areas (i.e. Alberta and Saskatchewan)
- For the first time in many weeks, Canada's  $R_t$  has fallen below 1, indicating the epidemic has dropped out of a growth pattern at the national level. Dr. Tam said, however, it could be over 1 in some regions.
- Vaccine coverage continues to increase, though a significant protection gap remains among the younger age groups with persistently high infection rates
  - Over 88% of eligible people, aged 12 years or older, have at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccines and over 82% are fully vaccinated nationwide
- Health regions with lower vaccination coverage are experiencing, or at risk of, high infection rates and hospitalizations, leading to strain across the health system
- Evidence shows COVID-19 vaccines continue to be highly protective, even with the Delta variant predominating in Canada
  - New cases among unvaccinated people were 10 times higher than in the fully vaccinated; and
  - Hospitalized cases among unvaccinated people were 36 times higher than in the fully vaccinated
- Longer-range forecast suggests that, at current levels of transmission, the fourth wave could decline in the coming weeks
- Maintaining key public health measures such as masking and spacing through the fall and winter could reduce the likelihood of overwhelming healthcare capacity

In Ontario, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths have been on a downward trend over the past month, while vaccination rates continue to slowly climb. As of October 28<sup>th</sup>, there have been a total of 598,840 cases and 9,865 deaths; the 7-day rolling average is 366 and the percent positivity is 1.3%. More than 10.9 million people are fully vaccinated. These positive trends have allowed the province to continue to move forward with loosening of Public Health Measures (PMH)

On September 24th, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Moore, announced the province would increase capacity limits for select indoor and outdoor settings where proof of vaccination is required, starting September 25th. Capacity limits for indoor events expanded to 50%, up to a maximum of 10,000 people and 75% for outdoor events to a maximum of 30,000. Restaurants were not included among the selected venues.

Also, starting October 4th, a new policy at Queen's Park will require anyone seeking access to the Ontario Legislature to provide "either proof of fully-vaccinated COVID-19 status or proof of a recent negative rapid antigen test result."

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 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.
- 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.

On October 2nd, the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table and Modelling Consensus Table provided an update on the latest modelling data. ([Analytics Related to Projections and Modelling:](#) )

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.

Education Minister Lecce confirmed his ministry is preparing for a province-wide rollout for vaccinations of children aged between 5-11. Dr. Moore indicated that a working group has been developed and is working on the plan to vaccinate children under 12 years old. The Province will be working with the Hospital for Sick Children to provide an information line on any questions related to the vaccine, as well as knowledge activities to inform parents on the risks and benefits of the vaccine through the Pediatric Working Group.

On October 8th, with public health and health care indicators remaining stable or improving, the government, announced it would be further cautiously lifting capacity limits in select indoor and outdoor settings where proof of vaccination is required, as well as certain outdoor settings that have a capacity below 20,000. This gradual and incremental approach is intended to continue to help protect people and ensure the province continues to cautiously lift public health measures safely.

The COVID-19 Science Table provided another Modelling Update on October 22nd: <https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/sciencebrief/update-on-covid-19-projections-12/>

- 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 suggests that continuing some public health measures will let us 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 we adopt smart, tailored strategies – like working with children, parents, schools, and communities – we can set the course for a strong immunization program in children when the vaccine is approved in younger age groups.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Ontario government released *A Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term*, which outlines the province's gradual approach to lifting remaining public health and workplace safety measures by March 2022. This phased approach will be guided by the ongoing assessment and monitoring of key public health and health care indicators, such as the identification of any new COVID-19 variants, increases in hospitalizations and ICU occupancy and rapid increases in transmission to ensure that public health and workplace safety measures are lifted safely. As a first step, starting October 25<sup>th</sup>, Ontario lifted capacity limits, including physical distancing requirements, in the vast majority of settings where proof of vaccinations are required, such as restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments; indoor areas of sports and recreational facilities such as gyms and where personal physical fitness trainers provide instruction; casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments; and indoor meeting and event spaces. Limits will also be lifted in certain outdoor settings. The government will also allow other settings (such as personal services settings, museums) to lift capacity limits and physical distancing requirements if they choose to require proof of vaccination. To manage COVID-19 over the long-term, local and regional responses by public health units will be deployed based on local context and conditions. Public health measures that may be applied locally could include reintroducing capacity limits and/or physical distancing, reducing gathering limits and adding settings where proof of vaccination is required, among others. Public health measures would be implemented provincially in exceptional circumstances, such as when the province's health system capacity is at risk of becoming overwhelmed or if a vaccine resistant COVID-19 variant is identified in the province.

In Huron Perth COVID-19 cases continue at a moderate rate with a total of 2,323 cases as of October 28<sup>th</sup>; 31 cases are active and 1 case remains in hospital (out of a total of 101). The total number of deaths rose to 67 (with an age range of 25 years to 104 years). There are currently 2 school outbreaks (Milverton Public and Huron Christian).

Here is a snapshot of COVID cases and hospital capacity taken from the Ontario Health website on October 28th with data as of October 27th: <https://ohwestcovid19.ca/g15dashboard/>

Snapshot <span>Page →</span>					
LHIN	Master PHUs	Incidence (Weekly New Cases per 100k)	% Positivity (7d Avg - Interim Data)	ICU Occupancy	Acute Occupancy
01 ESC	Chatham-Kent HU	60.2	3.14%	64%	93%
01 ESC	Lambton HU	39.7	2.78%	57%	77%
01 ESC	Windsor-Essex HU	32.7	2.63%	68%	90%
02 SW	Grey Bruce HU	12.4	1.49%	100%	95%
02 SW	Huron-Perth HU	17.9	1.69%	82%	83%
02 SW	Middlesex-London HU	23.1	1.55%	71%	89%
02 SW	Southwestern PH	44.9	3.59%	90%	104%
03 WW	Waterloo PH	15.1	1.70%	74%	97%
03 WW	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph HU	13.5	1.11%	83%	92%
04 HNHB	Brant HU	20.6	2.01%	78%	107%
04 HNHB	Haldimand-Norfolk HU	24.5	3.39%	100%	103%
04 HNHB	Hamilton HU	18.1	1.61%	88%	96%
04 HNHB	Niagara HU	28.6	3.12%	89%	108%

As of October 24th, 204,767 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Huron Perth by HPPH, Primary Care and Pharmacies. A total of 108,328 1<sup>st</sup> and 103,483 2<sup>nd</sup> doses have been delivered to Huron Perth residents, with third doses having been completed in the Long Term Care and Retirement Home Sector. Coverage in the eligible population 12 + years (%) stands at:

Population	Aged 12 years +
% with 1 dose	84.7
% with 2 doses	81.0

The Case and Contact Management, Facilities Response and School teams continue to respond to a steady stream of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks. During wave 4, we are experiencing a high number of school-related exposures with 4 outbreaks and 3 closures so far this term. In general, where the Public Health Measures are followed, transmission is limited. The closures have occurred in complex outbreaks with overlapping exposures; in one instance, there were 48 confirmed cases, 13 probable cases, and over 240 high-risk contacts involving multiple households, a church, three schools and two workplaces.

Staff on the Vaccine Preventable Diseases Team continue preparations for COVID-19 vaccine booster doses/3<sup>rd</sup> doses, COVID-19 pediatric program, fall influenza vaccine program, and pediatric catch-up vaccine programs for other school-based vaccines.

Communication priorities currently include:

- Promoting vaccination opportunities across Huron-Perth, including HPPH clinics and pop-up clinics,
- Communicating non-COVID-19 vaccination opportunities, such as the annual flu immunization campaign, as well as the Grade 7 immunization clinics held late October
- Continuing to support messaging for staff, operators and patrons around the provincial vaccine certificate requirement as well as the HPPH *Letter of Instruction* to recreational facilities used for organized sports, issued in October,

- Continuing to celebrate vaccination milestones, in order to document the vaccination rollout in Huron-Perth as well as support vaccine confidence campaigns,
- Customized outreach to women who are hoping to conceive, expecting or breastfeeding,
- Preparing outreach to parents of children ages 5-11, as well as groups eligible for a third dose,
- Providing communication support as needed to settings affected by an outbreak,
- Supporting continuing stakeholder calls, as well as additional Zoom meetings/conference calls with groups such as the Anabaptist communities and faith leaders.

Messaging continues to be distributed through:

- multiple mass communication platforms (online, print, media releases),
- stakeholder communications,
- individual replies to phone calls, emails and social media messages from residents.

HPPH has been informed that additional ministry funding support will be provided to ensure a continued successful response to COVID-19 and including the anticipated need for a large ongoing vaccine program

*Respectfully submitted by*

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