

## Update for Partners

### COVID-19

August 26, 2020

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### Current Situation

#### **Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status** (As of August 26, 2020, 2020 at 13:00)

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
693	24	629	37

#### **Highlights:**

- The weekly incidence rate in Simcoe Muskoka increased with 19 additional cases of COVID-19. In the last week four additional recoveries and no new deaths were also reported. There are currently two people hospitalized.
- 62.5% of current active cases are people under 35 years of age.
- There is currently one active outbreak in a long-term care home in Simcoe Muskoka.
- The most common COVID-19 comorbidities reported in Simcoe Muskoka are hypertension, diabetes, dementia and asthma.
- [A new report](#) on COVID-19 infection and marginalization in Simcoe Muskoka was released.

SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and the [COVID-19 Case Explorer](#)

#### **Ontario COVID-19 Case Status** (As of August 26, 2020 at 10:30)

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
41,695	1030	37,863	2,802

#### **Highlights:**

- There were 88 new cases of COVID-19, two new deaths and an increase of 115 resolved cases on August 25.
- There are currently 43 people hospitalized in Ontario with 15 of these people in ICU and 10 in ICU on a ventilator.
- Of the 1,030 active cases in Ontario, almost 60% are in people under the age of 40, with those aged 20-29 years having the most active cases of all age groups (227).
  - 18% in people under 20 years of age
  - 26% in people from 20 to 29 years of age
  - 15% in people from 30 to 39 years of age
- There are currently 28 ongoing outbreaks in health care facilities in Ontario (12 long-term care homes, 13 retirement homes and three hospitals)

- In the last two weeks there have been 23 domestic flights and 18 international flights in Ontario on which people may have been exposed to COVID-19. See specific information about these flights [here](#).
- For more provincial data see: [Province of Ontario COVID-19 case data](#) and [Public Health Ontario Data Tool](#), [Public Health Ontario Daily Epidemiologic Summary](#), [Public Health Ontario Weekly Epidemiologic Summaries](#)

### Canada COVID-19 Case Status (As of August 26, 2020 at 19:00 EDT)

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
126,417	4,868	112,455	9,094

#### Highlights:

- August 26 there were 448 new cases coming from QC, AB, ON, BC, MB, SK and NS and four new deaths coming from ON, QC and SK.
- The number of new cases and deaths reported weekly increased in the past week (August 9-15) with a 2% increase in weekly cases between August 9-15 (with increases in in BC, AB, SK, MB, NB, NS and PEI) and a 37% increase in deaths compared to the previous week. This is the first week of increase in deaths since early May.
- From August 9-15, AB, MB and BC had the highest incidence rates of COVID-19.
- Since early May there has been a steep decline in the number of deaths, with weekly deaths continuing to be highest amongst adults 70 years of age and older.
- Since late July, rates of COVID-19 have decreased in all age groups with the exception of adults 20-39 years of age.
- Since early July adults under 40 years of age account for the highest proportion of cases with 64% of cases in the previous week (August 9-15) in adults under 40. In the past reported week (August 9-15):
  - People less than 20 years of age represented 18% of cases (but only 9% of population)
  - People 20-29 years of age represented 25% of all cases (but only 14% of the population)
- Previous modelling which suggested Canada will have 125,280-130,610 cumulative cases and 9,060-9,170 cumulative deaths by August 30, 2020 appears to be on track.
- In the last two weeks there have been 32 flights within Canada and 36 flights coming into Canada from international locations on which people may have been exposed to COVID-19. See specific information about these flights [here](#).

National [daily epidemiology updates](#); National [weekly epidemiology report](#)  
[Update on COVID-19 in Canada: Epidemiology and Modelling](#) (August 14, 2020)

### Global Situation (As of August 26, 2020 at 10:41 CEST)

Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
23,697,273	814,438

- For August 17-23, there were over 1.7 million new cases and 39,000 new deaths reported. This is a 5% decrease in cases and a 12% decrease in deaths.
- In the last week, India, USA, Brazil, Colombia and Peru had the most new cases and Brazil, USA, India, Mexico and Colombia had the most new deaths.
- The Region of the Americas had the largest decreases in cases and deaths in the last week, but it remains the most affected with 50% of new cases and 62% of new deaths.
- Yesterday there were 206,382 new cases and 4,056 deaths around the world, with the highest number of new cases in India, USA, Brazil, Colombia and Argentina and the highest number of deaths in India, Brazil, USA, Argentina and Mexico.

[WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#);

Weekly Epidemiological Update ([August 23](#)); [Previous Situation Reports](#)

## Updates

### ***SMDHU Medical Officer of Health Key Messages from Tuesday, Aug 25, 2020***

Dr. Gardner's Facebook live media briefings take place on Tuesdays. They can be found on the [SMDHU Facebook page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

#### **Case numbers rising**

We are seeing a surge in our numbers. It appears the reason can be attributed to “slippages” in personal and workplace precautions. Please ensure that you continue to:

- **Protect your social circle** (the 10 person circle of people who you can hug and be close to without masking, this includes your family) by maintaining physical distancing and using face coverings/masks with those you socialize with outside of your circle. While you're out in the community follow infection prevention precautions including masking, physical distancing, washing/sanitizing hands frequently and sanitizing surfaces.
- **Protect your workmates and employees.** It is important to maintain physical distancing or wear masks in the workplace if you are not able to maintain a 2 metre distance from other workers or people in the workplace. This is important and applies not only for those dealing with the public but also behind the scenes in employee-only parts of the workplace. The employer has an obligation to put processes in place to protect workers and workers are responsible for following them. The protective processes include: screening, masking where distancing is not possible and in public spaces, frequent handwashing and sanitizing.

#### **Return to school:**

It has been difficult for families to make decisions about whether to send their children to school or have them do on-line learning. Everyone's situation is different, and the decision to send children to school in person needs to be one that works for your family. Staggered start has been announced by the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board and the Simcoe Muskoka District School Board. Information is available on their websites.

#### **SMDHU's role:**

The health unit has been working closely with school boards reviewing plans and precautions being put in place. We are hiring new public health nurses to assist and work with our schools and Infectious Diseases team to ensure schools have the support they need. We are also preparing for outbreak management, contact tracing, advice and support when cases arise in the school settings.

#### **Role of schools and school staff:**

Schools will have many measures in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 being introduced into and/or spread in the school setting, such as:

- physical distancing to the extent possible
- enhanced cleaning measures
- cohorting (keeping groups together) to the extent possible
- use of face coverings/masks for most students and staff
- prompt isolation of sick children and staff

### **Role of Parents and Caregivers:**

Parents and caregivers provide important support for students. Some things you can support and protect your child and others at school include:

- Teaching your child the importance of frequent handwashing, coughing into sleeve, following physical distancing requirements
- Helping your child get comfortable wearing a mask, if applicable, and how to wear it correctly
- Assessing your child's health before they leave for school each day
- Keeping your child home if they're unwell

### **Ventilation systems:**

Although there is no evidence of HVAC systems spreading COVID-19 to occupants of a space, HVAC systems are limited in their ability to influence the predominant form of transmission (close range via large droplets). Nevertheless, HVAC systems play an important role in healthy indoor air, and lack of ventilation can increase transmission risk. As such, the following should be considered for HVAC systems during the pandemic:

- **Sharing unventilated spaces with others is a COVID-19 transmission risk factor.** Air conditioners and fans that recirculate room air should not be used without additional fresh air supply to the space. Air filtration may reduce the amount of virus in the air, but its efficacy with respect to transmission reduction is unknown.
- **Ensure that your ventilation system is functioning as per design specifications.** Verifying that your system is [working properly](#) may require consulting with an HVAC professional.
- **Ventilation is a support, not a solution.** Ventilation may mitigate the risk of short-range aerosol transmission by preventing the accumulation of small particles in an enclosed space. However, the primary route of transmission is short-range droplets, which are unlikely to be affected or interrupted by most ventilation systems.
- **Reduce crowding.** Minimizing proximity to an infected person and duration of exposure is the most effective ways to reduce transmission.
- **Follow infection control principles consistently.** Key infection control principles include: minimizing contact, hand hygiene, regular environmental cleaning and disinfection, reducing crowding, using appropriate barriers (partitions, masks), protecting the vulnerable, and prioritizing fresh air.

### **New SMDHU reports**

[Mitigating Harms of COVID-19 Public Health Measures](#) situational assessment was conducted to:

- Determine if COVID-19 community-based public health measures are negatively influencing health and well-being (general well adult population, children and youth, people living with low income, and those who use substances).
- Identify mitigation strategies to reduce these negative impacts.
- Prioritize mitigation strategies for potential implementation for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Findings** - Potential harms include harms related to mental health, substance use, child well-being and development, domestic conflict, and access to services, along with the identification of certain sub-populations at risk. A variety of mitigation strategies were also

identified. The report concludes with five key considerations for SMDHU in responding to these findings as we continue with our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **COVID-19 Infection and Links with Ethno-Culturally Diverse Areas in Simcoe Muskoka**

was conducted as research published in Ontario (Toronto Public Health, Public Health Ontario, ICES, Internationally) has found a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 infections on persons of colour. Is it occurring in Simcoe Muskoka?

- **Findings** - A higher rate of COVID-19 infection is observed in persons living in areas with higher levels of ethno-cultural diversity in our region as well. From these findings the health unit is now seeking to engage these populations for voluntary individual level sociodemographic data to gain a deeper understanding and as well is considering short-term responses as part of our ongoing priority to addressing the social and structural determinants of health.

**COVID-19 Infection and Marginalization in Simcoe Muskoka** was conducted as research and has shown a higher rate of COVID-19 infection in persons living in areas with higher ethno-cultural diversity similar to the results found elsewhere. Research elsewhere has also identified other measures of marginalization associated with increased COVID-19 burden, such as living in low-income areas. Would our population reflect the same?

- **Findings** – Unlike provincial and other public health units that found higher incidence rates in areas with low-income, more dependency (no income from employment such as children and seniors), and higher residential instability (poor community connections), these patterns are not evident here. In fact in Simcoe Muskoka, COVID-19 incidence rates are higher in areas where people are well and moderately-resourced. The majority of our cases have occurred in areas where people have enough money to buy the things they need and where they have strong connections with their community. (Testing rates was not shown to be a factor and testing was higher among those living in marginalized areas.) There are a number of potential explanations for these findings including transmission exposure in workplaces and while commuting on public transit. The information will be used to target messages to at-risk groups, and will be shared with municipal and other partners for planning, and we will continue to monitor factors associated with the risk of COVID-19 infection including socio-demographic disparity.

### ***Local Media (August 20-26, 2020)***

- COVID-19 outbreak declared at Barrie long-term-care home ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka records 'bit of a surge' in COVID-19 cases in late August ([article](#))
- Vaccine catch-up, 20 new nurses on health unit's back-to-school agenda ([article](#))
- School bus drivers' union raises concerns ahead of back-to-school, local Medical Officer of Health hints at low ridership ([article](#))
- Local Catholic Board hands down Return to Learn Guide for families ([article](#))
- Pandemic triggers OCD symptoms in some children, Barrie therapist says ([article](#))
- Muskoka businesses struggle through COVID-19 ([article](#))
- School board releases COVID-19 return-to-school plan for Muskoka students ([article](#))
- Majority of public school students in Simcoe County will be in class next month ([article](#))
- Parents in Simcoe County thinking beyond traditional back to school discussions ([article](#))
- City seeks feedback about See You on the Patio program ([article](#))
- Made in Simcoe campaign will pivot to spotlight COVID creativity ([article](#))

- Public board students will face staggered start for back-to-school ([article](#))
- Barrie Public Library's downtown, Painswick branches reopen for in-person visits ([article](#))
- Muskoka school board 'scrambling' as back to school approaches, says trustee ([article](#))
- Company picks Barrie mall to test market mask and sanitizer vending machines ([article](#))
- Four new COVID-19 cases in Simcoe County today ([article](#))

### ***Provincial Updates since the August 19th Partner Update***

#### The Ontario government:

- Released the COVID-19 Management Plan for Schools (to prevent and minimize outbreaks) ([news release](#))
- Announced additional funds enhance Ontario's robust back-to-school plan ([news release](#))
- Announced the expansion of indoor capacity for meeting and event facilities ([news release](#))
- Announced it is partnering with the Federal Government and 3M Canada on new N95 respirator manufacturing facility ([news release](#))
- Announced support for agricultural and rural fall fairs and exhibitions ([news release](#))
- Extends Orders under the reopening Ontario Act, 2020 ([news release](#))
- Improves service delivery at provincial agencies ([news release](#))

#### Other provincial news:

- Ontario nurses call for smaller class sizes, use of masks in schools ([article](#))
- Ford says COVID-19 back-to-school ad campaign will continue despite criticism ([article](#))
- Premier, education minister defend Ontario's back-to-school busing plan ([article](#))
- As parents scramble for options this fall, some are leaving conventional school out of the equation ([article](#))
- 'Learning pods' taking off as new school year nears ([article](#))
- Worried about not having enough back-to-school PPE? A group of Toronto teachers is trying to help ([article](#))
- Ontario: Province could do proactive COVID-19 testing in some schools, top doctor says ([article](#))
- Premier Doug Ford says 'in-depth' back-to-school plan to be unveiled Friday ([article](#))
- 'We're sitting ducks': School bus drivers uneasy about returning to work amid COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Toronto schools in areas hardest hit by COVID-19 to have class sizes capped, TDSB says ([article](#))

### ***National Updates since the August 19th Partner Update***

#### The Government of Canada:

- Announces plan to help support Canadians through the next phase of recovery ([news release](#))
- Announced the extension Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy support for furloughed employees for four weeks ([news release](#))
- Announced new temporary public policy allowing visitors to apply for work permit without having to leave Canada ([news release](#))
- Released Canadian lockdown stories from the National Film Board of Canada ([news release](#))
- Announces support for a safe return to First Nations schools on reserves ([news release](#))
- Released a backgrounder on facilitative measures to support international students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic ([backgrounder](#))
- Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada [August 20](#),
- [August 22](#), [August 23](#), [August 24](#), [August 26](#)



#### Other national news:

- COVID-19: Financial future grim for Canadians with disabilities, health conditions, experts say ([article](#))
- COVID-19: University students face a precarious future ([article](#))
- Lingering symptoms among COVID-19 'long haulers' remain a mystery ([article](#))
- Ottawa earmarks \$82.5-million for Indigenous mental health ([video](#))
- University of Toronto research to explore racism in health care during pandemic ([article](#))
- Ottawa to give provinces \$2-billion to bolster safe reopening of schools this fall ([article](#))
- COVID-related anxiety is common, but many are learning to overcome it, says psychologist ([article](#))
- In grim first for Quebec, a 19-year-old Montrealer dies of COVID-19 ([article](#))
- New \$37B COVID-19 aid package extends CERB, expands EI and adds 'recovery' benefit ([article](#))
- Your guide to new benefits for Canadians during COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Visitors to some long-term care centres subject to COVID-19 waiver before seeing loved ones ([article](#))
- 'This shouldn't have happened:' Father attributes son's death to COVID-19 rules ([article](#))
- How some universities are doing frosh week amid a global pandemic ([article](#))
- From centralized online school to on-demand classes remote learning won't be one-size fits all ([article](#))
- COVID-19: Pandemic exacerbates pressures faced by women caregivers, experts says ([article](#))

#### ***International Updates since the August 19<sup>th</sup> Partner Update***

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Director-General highlighted that the fastest way to end the pandemic and reopen economies is to start by protecting the highest risk populations everywhere ([link](#))
- Published [updated guidance on quarantine measures](#) for individuals identified as contacts of a case of COVID-19
- Updated the [website](#): Q&A on children and the use of masks and published new [guidance on the use of masks for children](#) which is an annex to previously published [guidance on the use of masks](#).
- Regional-Director for the Americas identified that COVID-19 has negatively affected mental health and raised concerns about increasing domestic violence, stating countries in the Americas should [expand and invest in mental health services](#), and use available resources such as those [publications produced by WHO](#).
- Is encouraging countries to ensure access to prenatal care services as [recent studies show an increased risk of severe forms of COVID-19 among pregnant women](#).
- Published a [communication toolkit](#) for long-term care facilities which compliments the [policy brief](#) on preventing and managing COVID-19 across long-term care services.

#### ***SMDHU Resources***

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and the [COVID-19 Case Explorer](#).
- [SMDHU Vulnerable Populations for COVID-19 Response Interactive Map](#) highlights vulnerable populations in Simcoe Muskoka.
- Current COVID-19 information is available on our [website](#). We are always keeping our website up to date, the following are **new or revised**:

##### [Return to School](#)

- **New** expander bar: [Managing food in schools](#)
- [Families](#)
- **New** FAQ's- [Return to school for families](#)
- **New** expander bar: [Packing healthy and safe lunches](#)

- School Administrators and Educators:
    - New:** [French Letter to parents and caregivers](#)
  - [Reopening and Operating Your Business Safely](#)
  - **Revised** [FAQ for Recreation Water Facilities](#)
  - **New** resource: [Working with farm operators to stop the spread of COVID-19](#)
  - [Partners and Municipalities](#)
    - [Places of Worship](#)
      - Replaced:** [COVID-19 Advice: Religious Services, Rites or Ceremonies](#)
  - [COVID-19 Main Page: Wearing a face covering in all indoor public spaces](#)
  - **Updated:** [FAQ's - What you need to know about wearing a face covering in indoor public spaces](#)
  - **Updated:** [FAQ's – What businesses need to know](#)
  - SMDHU Health Connection responds to calls and emails about COVID-19. Contact Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 5829 or via [email](#).
- Health Connection Hours:**
- Monday-Friday - 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
  - Saturday - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### **Credible Sources of Information**

- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)