

COVID-19 Update for Partners

December 16, 2020

[Key messages from Dr. Gardner](#)

[Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status](#)

[Local Media Updates](#)

[Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status](#)

[Provincial, National and Global Updates](#)

[SMDHU Resources](#)

[Credible Sources of Information](#)

Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

1. **Simcoe Muskoka moves into 'Red-Control'**

Our area moved into 'Red-Control', as Ontario saw cases surge to 2,275 in one day, another single day record. [I have issued a special statement](#) outlining the required changes as our area moves into "Red-Control" and our [COVID-19 webpages](#) have been updated with information and expectations for businesses and workplaces, municipalities and partners, and individuals and families under the Red-Control classification. I urge you to visit them to clarify any questions you have.

The biggest change is in the numbers of people who can gather. At this time, gatherings are limited to only 5 indoors (but it is recommended no one outside of your household visits indoors) and a maximum of 25 outdoors. There are public health and business restrictions that can be found in [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#) and through the [SMDHU Website](#) where guidance documents are being updated to reflect the Red Framework.

As the pandemic goes on we continue to be challenged emotionally, physically, socially and financially. I know how fatigued people are of this pandemic and I know further restrictions make things even more difficult, particularly during the holiday season. It is absolutely crucial that everyone limit their close social interactions. I encourage businesses to have employees work remotely, where possible and I implore everyone in Simcoe Muskoka to:

- Have close social contact with only people living your household;
- Limit activities outside your home to only those that are essential (e.g. work, school, groceries/pharmacy, health care, assisting vulnerable individuals, and exercise/physical activity);
- Gather with those outside of your immediate household virtually; and
- Wear a face covering in indoor public spaces, and outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained.

2. **Local vaccine and immunizations**

There is hope on the horizon with the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines. In collaboration with the province, the health unit and key healthcare partners are preparing for the largest undertaking of public immunization in recent history. Locally in partnership with RVH and

key stakeholders, SMDHU will be leading the efforts to immunize residents in Simcoe Muskoka. I expect SMDHU will be vaccinating people against COVID-19 into fall of next year.

The Ministry of Health created a three-phase plan for vaccine roll out. The following groups will be the first to receive the vaccine in Ontario over the next few months:

- Residents, staff, essential caregivers, and other employees of congregate living settings (e.g. long-term care homes and retirement homes) that provide care for seniors as they are at higher risk of infection and serious illness from COVID-19;
- Health care workers, including hospital employees, other staff who work or study in hospitals, and other health care personnel;
- Adults in Indigenous communities, including remote communities where risk of transmission is high; and
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care.

3. MOH issues letter to parents and guardians of school children

On Monday, I issued a letter to the parents and guardians of school children asking that they talk with their kids about taking precautions outside of school hours. In the school setting there are protocols in place to reduce the risk of transmission between students. Once they leave school they need to continue to follow precautions including masking, physical distancing, and hand washing. It is important for children to understand that outside of the school setting physical distancing, masking, and frequent handwashing/sanitizing are still necessary even with students/friends both inside and outside of classroom cohorts.

During the holiday break we are asking parents to reinforce some important actions:

- Avoid indoor gatherings with others outside of your household and if outdoors, keep the number small;
- Wear a mask and stay 2 metres away from those not from your household;
- Be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home when feeling sick; and
- Download the COVID-19 alert app onto compatible mobile devices.

Our youth are important contributors to helping us reduce transmission and we need the adults in their lives, particularly parents and guardians, to reinforce that message. The letter is posted on our [COVID webpages under Schools](#).

4. Case and Contact Management (CCM) changes

With the primary goal to reach cases and contacts as quickly as possible to ensure they have the necessary information to prevent further transmission, SMDHU has implemented changes to our CCM, including:

- Reducing the amount of information we are gathering to shorten interview times and increase the number of new cases we can reach per day;
- No longer providing further follow-up with cases, however, investigators will be available by phone for further questions or guidance when needed; and
- We are asking people with positive tests to reach out to their close contacts to inform them they need to quarantine (self-isolate) for 14 days from the last exposure and to get tested.

People with positive tests are educated about who is considered a close contact (anyone in your household or anyone outside of your household that you have had close contact [within 2 metres] with when you and the other person were not wearing masks) and a fact sheet has been developed for close contacts to understand what they need to do next.

Dr. Gardner's next Facebook live media briefing will take place on Tuesday December 22nd. Previous media briefings can be found on the SMDHU [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel.

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of December 16, 2020 14:00)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
2,791	401	2,318	57
Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the last day there has been an increase of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52 new cases 41 recovered cases 3 new hospitalizations 1 new death There are currently 17 people hospitalized in Simcoe Muskoka. So far this week (starting Dec. 13), there have been 213 new cases reported to the health unit. Last week (Dec. 6th - 12th), there were 333 new COVID-19 cases reported by the health unit which was the highest number of weekly cases reported since the pandemic began. Approximately half of all new infections in December with a known cause were acquired from close contact with a confirmed positive case and about 20% were acquired in the community with no known source of infection. Nearly one-third of all active cases are among young adults 18-34 years. This age group has had the highest rate of infection since June and the rate in November and December for this age group is double the rate in September and October. There are currently 26 ongoing outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka including seven in educational settings, six in congregate settings, four each in long-term care and retirement homes, three in workplaces, two in correctional facilities and one in a hospital. There are currently 16 ongoing outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka, Highlights from last reporting week (Dec. 6-12): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The weekly incidence rate in Simcoe Muskoka increased to 312 new cases, with the average daily growth of cases being 1.8%; 23% of new cases had no epidemiological link and 23% were related to outbreaks; and The average daily growth in confirmed cases was 1.8% (based on the same growth, projections show there will be 425 cases reported during the week of January 3 – January 9, 2021 or about 60 cases per day). <p>SMDHU COVID-19 HealthSTATS page and the COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard</p>			

Local Media Updates (Since Dec. 9, 2020 Partner Update)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catch-up immunization available for students who missed vaccines due to COVID (article) Second patient dies at Midland hospital amid COVID outbreak (article) COVID vaccine could arrive in Barrie as soon as next week (article) Muskoka headed for new monthly high of COVID-19 cases with 4 more on Dec. 16 (article) Outbreak declared at Penetang superjail (article) Health unit tracking workplace outbreaks in Barrie (article) Three people charged with breaching COVID-19 emergency orders (article)

- COVID-19 risk remains in Muskoka, despite efforts to stand apart from Simcoe ([article](#))
- Huntsville mayor says efforts to separate Muskoka's COVID-19 status from Simcoe continue ([article](#))
- RVH clamps down on visitors, new restrictions put in place ([article](#))
- Rapid testing at Soldiers' Memorial allows more 'reactive' response to COVID ([article](#))
- Six new school COVID cases reported over the weekend in Barrie, Alliston and Bradford ([article](#))
- Barrie minor hockey association, Barrie Women's Hockey Association suspends programming ([article](#))
- New rules for Muskoka hospital visitors 'may feel tough and strict' as COVID-19 cases increase ([article](#))
- Seeing red: Ontario government moves Simcoe-Muskoka region into 'red-control' restriction zone ([article](#))
- Thanksgiving showed holiday family gatherings are risky, says Gardner ([article](#))
- Vaccine brings hope but also new challenges, says Dr. Gardner ([article](#))
- COVID case confirmed at Georgian's Barrie Campus ([article](#))
- Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital reinstating stricter visiting rules ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status			
Ontario (As of December 16, 2020, 10:30)			
Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
146,535	17,084	125,416	4,035
Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the last update: Almost 14,000 more people have been infected with COVID-19, approximately 12,500 people have recovered and 199 people have died. • There are almost 1,000 more active cases in the province compared to the same day last week. • In the last day there has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an increase of 2,139 new cases; ○ an increase of 2,043 resolved cases; and ○ an increase of 43 deaths. • There are currently 923 people hospitalized with 256 in ICU of which 157 are on ventilators. • 51.5% of active cases are in people under 40 years of age. • There are currently 856 active outbreaks occurring in Ontario (up from 811 last week), with 271 in health care settings, 242 in workplaces, 190 in education settings, 84 in group living settings, 54 in recreational settings and 15 in other/unknown settings. • Almost 50,000 tests were completed yesterday with 5.4% of the processed tests as positive. • 40.9% of tests are processed within one day and 78.1% are processed within two days. • Highlights from the most recent full week of reporting (Nov. 29 – Dec. 5): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An increase in cases were reported to public health units (12,519, up from 11,017). ○ There have been over 100 COVID-19 related deaths occurring each week for four weeks. ○ All age groups had an increase in cases except the 80 and older group; ○ Those aged 20-39 account for the most cases. ○ 573 health care workers tested positive. ○ In long-term care, 354 residents tested positive and 19 died. ○ 1,336 students (4-17 years of age) tested positive. 			

- The effective reproductive number (R_e) from the previous week is 1.04 (The R_e an estimate of the average number of people that 1 person with COVID-19 will infect. [Learn more about \$R_e\$](#)).
- Positive results increased the most in children under 18 years of age.
- Health unit areas with the most active cases are: City of Toronto, Peel Region, York Region, Windsor-Essex County and Durham Region.

For more provincial data see: [Province of Ontario COVID-19 case data](#) and [Public Health Ontario Data Tool](#), [Public Health Ontario Daily Epidemiologic Summaries](#), [Public Health Ontario Weekly Epidemiologic Summaries](#)

Canada (As of December 15, 2020 at 19:00 EDT)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
475,214	75,580	385,975	13,659

Highlights:

- In the last week:
 - Over 33,000 people tested positive for COVID-19
 - 550 people died of COVID-19
 - Over 30,000 people recovered from COVID-19
- There are 2,355 more active cases of COVID-19, compared to one week ago.
- On December 15, Canada reported a previous day increase of:
 - 6,352 new cases
 - 166 deaths
- New daily cases were reported in ON (2,275), QC (1,741), AB (1,341), BC (520) MB (271), SK (194), NS (6), Nunavut (2); NB (1), and NWT (1)
- New deaths were reported in QC (38), BC (21), ON (20), AB (11), MB (9), and SK (7).
- National highlights from the last published reporting week of Nov. 29 to Dec. 5:
 - All provinces and territories except the Northwest Territories reported new cases.
 - Age specific incidence rates increased in all age groups, with the largest increase observed among those 20 to 29 years of age followed by those 40 to 49 years of age. The highest age specific incidence rates were observed in those 80 years of age and older and in those 20 to 29 years of age.
 - 560,763 people were tested, representing a 7% increase compared to the previous week.
 - Manitoba continues to report the highest age-standardized incidence rate (158.8 new cases per 100,000 population), while the largest increase in age-standardized incidence rate compared to the previous week was observed in BC (from 60.8 to 148 cases per 100,000 population).
 - On Dec 5 there were 2,832 cases hospitalized and 552 cases in ICU, representing a 17% and 18% increase, respectively, in the daily hospitalized and ICU cases compared to Nov. 28.
 - 40% of hospitalized cases were 60 to 79 years of age (This age group continues to account for the highest proportion of cases hospitalized and admitted to ICU, followed closely by the 80 years and older age group).
 - 560,763 people were tested for COVID-19, representing a 7% increase in testing compared to the previous week.
 - According to forecasting, between 531,300 to 577,000 cumulative reported cases and 14,410 to 14,920 cumulative deaths are expected by December 25, 2020.

National [daily epidemiology updates](#); National [weekly epidemiology report](#)

Global (As of December 16, 2020 at 10:03am CET)	
Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
71,919,725	1,623,064
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On December 15, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 497,093 new cases of COVID-19 and 8,472 people died of COVID-19. In the past day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The United States, Turkey, Russia, India, and Brazil reported the most new cases. The United States, Russia, Germany, Italy, and Poland reported the most new deaths. Global weekly case incidence and mortality remains high with over 3 million new cases and over 52,000 deaths reported. In the past week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The United States, Brazil, Turkey, India, and Russia had the most new cases. The United States, Brazil, Italy, Mexico, and Russia had the most new deaths. New cases and new deaths continued to rise in the Americas, while new cases stabilized in Europe for the third week in a row and deaths continued to decrease. The Region of the Americas reported the largest proportion of cases and deaths globally, accounting for 47% and 40% of global cases and deaths respectively. This also represents the highest reported cases and deaths since the start of the pandemic. Overall, the Regions of the Americas and Europe continue to shoulder the burden of the pandemic, accounting for 85% of new cases and 86% of new deaths globally. <p>WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard; Previous Situation Reports</p>	

Provincial, National and Global Updates *(Since Dec. 9, 2020 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Launches new 'Support Local' marketing campaign ([news release](#))
- Provides more financial relief for municipalities during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Delivers first COVID-19 vaccine in the country ([statement](#))
- Begins rollout of COVID-19 vaccine ([news release](#))
- Helps municipalities and Indigenous Partners respond to COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Delivers first COVID-19 vaccine in the country ([news release](#))
- Updates testing guidelines for outbound international travelers ([news release](#))
- Orders new management at Etobicoke long-term care home ([media advisory](#))
- Supports the training of early childhood educators ([news release](#))
- Moves regions to new levels - Ontario moving regions to new levels with stronger public health measures ([news release](#))
- Invests in virtual learning strategy ([news release](#))
- Premier Ford calls for clear answer on Canada health transfer increase ([statement](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Ontario tells hospitals to activate emergency plans as number of COVID-19 patients spike ([article](#))
- Ontario retirement homes push for mandatory COVID-19 testing for caregivers, support workers ([article](#))
- Ontario personal support worker is first Canadian to get dose of COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))

- Who will be next in line to get the COVID-19 vaccine? And how will you know when it's your turn ([article](#))
- Ontario reports more than 2,000 new COVID-19 cases for 2nd straight day ([article](#))
- There are now more patients in Ontario ICUs than at any other point during COVID-19 pandemic ([article](#))
- GTA businesses ask for loosening of Ontario's COVID-19 restrictions in lockdown zones ([article](#))
- Ontario no longer providing free COVID-19 tests for international travellers ([article](#))
- Ontario schools reporting 137 new COVID-19 cases as schools continue to shut down to battle outbreaks ([article](#))
- Why Doug Ford's daily COVID-19 news conferences have suddenly stopped ([article](#))
- A population based study in Ontario suggests that severity of COVID-19 may differ across different ABO and Rh blood types ([article](#))

National Updates

From the Government of Canada:

- Announce Ottawa Safe Voluntary Isolation Site Program with Associate Minister of Finance and Medical Officer of Health for Ottawa ([media advisory](#))
- Renews support to increase access to winter activities and sports ([news release](#))
- Clears Santa for take-off in Canadian airspace ([news release](#))
- Announces free online films to watch from the NFB this holiday season ([news release](#))
- Receives early access to Moderna COVID-19 vaccine ([news release](#))
- Invests in promising treatment that could fight COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Introduce simplified process for claiming home office expenses ([news release](#)) ([backgrounder](#))
- Release results from the latest Canadian Health Measures Survey ([news release](#))
- Officials say action 'urgently needed' as COVID-19 cases rise, holidays begin ([article](#))
- Canada could hit 12,000 new cases of COVID-19 a day by January, new modelling shows ([article](#))
- Prime Minister hosts First Ministers' Meeting on fighting COVID-19 and strengthening health care ([news release](#))
- Canada's investments to support equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines ([backgrounder](#))
- Correctional Services Canada is working with the Canadian Red Cross on COVID-19 response ([news release](#))
- Government of Canada COVID-19 Update Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada: [Dec. 16](#), [Dec. 15](#), [Dec. 14](#), [Dec. 10](#), [Dec. 9](#).

Other National News:

- What's happening in Canada and around the world on Wednesday ([article](#))
- Canada monitoring potential threats to vaccine rollout ([article](#))
- Inside one of Canada's new COVID-19 vaccination clinics ([article](#))
- Can employers make the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory? The law isn't clear ([article](#))
- Canadians prefer strict lockdowns over partial shutdowns ([article](#))
- Canada introduced national compensation program for vaccine injuries ahead of pandemic vaccine rollout ([article](#))
- Do you have the COVID Alert app on your iPhone? It might not be working ([article](#))
- Health officials hope to reassure those reluctant to get COVID-19 vaccine ([video](#))

- First shots of Pfizer vaccine won't be given to residents of Canada's long-term care homes: Tam ([article](#))
- Here's the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan, province by province ([article](#))
- Once someone is vaccinated, do they still have to wear a mask? Your COVID-19 vaccine questions answered ([article](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccine: Health Canada recommendation for people with allergies ([article](#))
- COVID-19 Public health measures must continue, even with first vaccines ([article](#))
- Canadians risk fines, personal liability if gathering over the holidays, lawyer says ([article](#))
- Governments across Canada grapple with COVID-19 messaging amid holiday season ([article](#))
- Health Canada adds to growing hand sanitizer recall list ([article](#))
- Canada introduced national compensation program for vaccine injuries ahead of pandemic vaccine rollout ([article](#))

Global Updates

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Director-General opened the General Assembly Special Session with a [key note address](#) outlining key areas of leadership needed to end the pandemic. This includes investing in: vaccines, preparedness to prevent the next pandemic, health as a foundation, and multilateralism to safeguard our common future.
- Director-General marked [Human Rights Day and Universal Health Coverage Day](#) by noting the importance of the foundation of human rights, including the right to health as a foundation of rebuilding from the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Hosted the [3rd Global Infodemic Management Conference](#) where a community-led approach to halt the spread of misinformation was advocated for.
- In collaboration the world's largest youth organizations, launched "[Global Youth Mobilization for Generation Disrupted](#)" a new global youth mobilization movement investing in and scaling up youth-led solutions in response to COVID-19.
- EPI-WIN updates: [How to select, implement and adjust public health & social measures](#)
- Published:
 - [Checklist to support schools re-opening and preparation for COVID-19 resurgences or similar public health crises](#)
 - [Public health considerations for elections and related activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
 - [Evidence to recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines: Evidence framework](#)

Other International News:

- The Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) launched the "Stop Swapping Air" public service messaging campaign to reinforce the message that not swapping air is the most effective step you can take right now to protect yourself, your family, friends, and colleagues ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#)
- [SMDHU Vulnerable Populations for COVID-19 Response Interactive Map](#) highlights vulnerable populations in Simcoe Muskoka.
- Current COVID-19 information is available on our [website](#). Updates have been made to:

Main COVID

- **New:** [December 15, 2020 Special Statement from the Medical Officer of Health](#)
- **New:** [Limits on close contacts, social gathering and events](#)
- **Updated:** [Holiday Travel](#)

Stop the Spread

- **Revised** include information about Red-Control

Operating your Business Safely

- **Amended:** [Letter of Instruction to Businesses and Organizations for Additional Public Health Measures](#)
- **Revised:**
 - [Food Premises - RED](#)
 - [Indoor and Outdoor Gatherings - Red](#)
 - [FAQ wearing masks or face coverings- RED](#)
 - [Safety Plan Guidance Document- RED](#)
 - [Recreational water guidance- RED](#)
 - [Winter Holiday Celebrations](#)
 - [Guidance for Day Camps](#)

Partners and Municipalities

- **Revised:**
 - [Covid-19 Guidance for Outdoor Ice Surfaces/Rinks and Outdoor Skating Trails Red-Control](#)
 - [Indoor and Outdoor Gatherings - Red](#)
 - [Places of Worship- RED](#)
 - [Farmers' Markets - RED](#)
 - [Food Banks - RED PDF](#)
- **Added:** [Guidance for Warming Centres](#)

School Administrators and Educators / Families

- **New:** [December 14, 2020 - Letter to parents and guardians](#)
- **Revised:** [COVID-19: SMDHU Supplemental Guidance Document For School Settings](#)

Reporting Preventative Measures Complaints

- **Revised** information on [Complaints about gatherings](#)

NEW Section: Vaccine and Immunization

Assessment Centres and Testing

- **Revised** information about [Bradford community pop up testing clinic](#)
 - **New:** As of December 11th, 2020 the [Provincial Government announced](#) that Domestic and International travel testing will no longer be provided at COVID-19 Testing Centres. People are encouraged to find a private COVID-19 testing clinic if testing is required related to travel. Please note that there is a cost to private testing.
- 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](#)