

## COVID-19 Update for Partners

December 23, 2020

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### Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

#### **Mass immunization update**

December 22<sup>nd</sup> was historic in that Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) began the complex COVID-19 immunization rollout across Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka. Yesterday, a health unit public health nurse administered the first vaccine to Lori Black, a Barrie-based personal services worker on the frontline caring for vulnerable seniors at Victoria Village long-term care home. I give commendation for Lori's outspoken support for the vaccine. She is among the first priority group to be immunized by invitation only in the first phase of the rollout at the COVID-19 Immunization Clinic.

The immunization campaign will continue well into next year as more vaccines become available. The vaccine will not be broadly distributed to the general public until later in 2021. We hope to soon have an additional vaccine that can be moved offsite to congregate settings to protect those most vulnerable. Well over half of our deaths have been in long-term care facilities.

We have many months ahead of us until we have immunized as many people that want the vaccine. In the meantime, we must continue to practice the public health measures that will keep us and our loved ones safe. Our message continues - wear a mask, physically distance from those outside your households, wash your hands frequently, stay home if sick, and get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms.

Additional information about the mass immunization rollout by priority group is [available on new COVID Vaccine and Immunization pages on our website.](#)

#### **Vaccine safety and efficacy**

The approved COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) have completed the same [development and approval process](#) as all other vaccines authorized for use in Canada with two differences:

- Different phases of vaccine development occurred simultaneously, instead of waiting for one step to be done at a time (shaving off years to the usual process)
- Health Canada fast-tracked the approval process by reviewing data as it became available throughout the development phase (instead of the usual process of reviewing all of that data once the clinical trials were completed).

Both Moderna and Pfizer are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines. Messenger RNA are strands of genetic material that direct protein production in cells. Scientists have developed mRNA that direct cells to produce proteins that imitate those found in SARS-CoV-2. When the mRNA vaccine is injected into the body, the cells use it to make viral proteins (antigens). The viral proteins trigger immune cells that lead to the production of antibodies. In the past, mRNA technology has been focused on cancer, with tumour mRNA being used to help people's immune systems recognize and respond to the proteins produced by their specific tumours. mRNA vaccines are a promising alternative to conventional vaccine approaches because of high potency and the capacity for rapid and safe administration.

### **COVID-19: Provincewide shutdown**

A provincewide shutdown will help interrupt or slow current community transmission, reduce mobility and allow our health care and public health systems that are reaching critical limits to recover briefly and catch-up.

The restrictions start at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, December 26, 2020 and remain in effect until Saturday, January 23, 2021 for Simcoe Muskoka and the 26 other public health unit regions in Southern Ontario.

[Additional measures under lockdown include](#), but are not limited to:

- No indoor organized public events and social gatherings, outdoors groups are limited to 10 people with physical distancing
- Weddings/funerals where distancing possible – 10 people indoors, 10 outdoors
- Restaurants, bars and food/drink establishments – take-out and delivery only
- Retailers for food, pharmacy, alcohol, safety products, prescription eyewear – open with limitations
- Non-essential retail – curbside pickup, malls closed to general shopping
- Essential businesses/services as identified by the province – gas stations, laundromats, rental and leasing, motor vehicle sales, financial services, real estate sales – open with limitations
- Manufacturing, agriculture, food production construction, resources and energy, essential community services – open with specific sector limitations
- Libraries open for curbside service
- Closed – amusement parks, tour and guide services, zoos, museums, casinos, gaming and bingo establishments
- Schools – elementary students return to in-person learning on January 11, 2021; secondary students will continue learning remotely until January 25. During this period, child care centres, authorized recreational and skill building programs and home-based child care services will remain open
- Post-secondary institutions open for virtual instruction, with limited exceptions where in-person instruction is required (e.g. clinical training, trades) – subject to physical distancing with limited exceptions.

For a full list of restrictions, go to the [Ontario government](#) website. The health unit continually updates information and helpful links for residents and businesses on our [website COVID-19 pages](#).

### **Case and contact management**

With the increasing number of cases, there is a current delay of one to three days from the time we receive a positive lab result to the time our staff is able to contact that person. Therefore, it continues to be important that anyone testing positive to self-isolate at home. Household members, even if they do not have symptoms, should seek testing as soon as they can and also self-isolate at home for 14 days even if their test result is negative, as they may still be infected. We continue to do our best to increase our ability to connect with persons with positive results as quickly as possible. We have [information on our website](#) on how to self-isolate or care for someone who has COVID.

### **Season's greetings**

I want to wish everyone a happy, safe and healthy holiday knowing it will be difficult to be away from family this year. By continuing to practice the public health measures we can help ensure that when it is safe to gather together next, no one we love is missing.

- The fewer people you have contact with, the lower the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Remember that just because you know someone, it doesn't reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19.
- Trips outside of the home should only be for essential reasons (work, school, groceries/pharmacy, health care, assisting vulnerable individuals, or physical activity).
- Do not visit any other households or allow visitors in your home. If you live alone, you can have close contact with only one other household.
- Everyone should avoid social gatherings.
- Work remotely, where possible.

*Dr. Gardner's next Facebook live media briefing will take place on **Tuesday January 5<sup>th</sup>**, 2021. Previous media briefings can be found on the SMDHU [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel. The next Partner Update will be published on **Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>**, 2021.*

<b>Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status</b> (As of December 23, 2020 14:00)			
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Recovered</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
3,159	614	2,469	60
<b>Highlights:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the last day there has been an increase of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ 49 new cases</li><li>○ 51 recovered cases</li><li>○ 4 new hospitalizations</li></ul></li><li>• There are currently 22 people hospitalized in Simcoe Muskoka.</li><li>• There have been 274 new cases reported by the health unit for the current week, beginning December 20th. There were 310 new cases reported by the health unit last week, from December 13th to 19th, which is the second highest number of weekly cases reported since the start of the pandemic.</li><li>• For the most recent week (December 13th - 19th), the average daily growth in confirmed cases was 1.7%. Based on projections, if this level of growth continues there</li></ul>			

will be approximately 460 cases reported during the week of January 10th - 16th, or about 65 cases per day with a projected weekly incidence rate of 80 cases per 100,000 population.

- The vast majority of COVID-19 cases in Simcoe Muskoka have recovered from the infection.
- Most COVID-19 cases in Simcoe Muskoka are from the Barrie and South Simcoe areas. Click [here](#) to view the epidemic curve by municipality.
- 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.

SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and the [COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#)

## Local Media Updates *(Since Dec. 17, 2020 Partner Update)*

- COVID-19 vaccine is welcome news but presents 'great challenge' ([article](#))
- RVH to restrict visitors during lockdown ([article](#))
- Local skiers urging province to keep hills open during lockdown ([article](#))
- Barrie PSW makes history as first in region to receive vaccine ([video](#))
- Muskoka COVID-19 case counts 'a warning': medical officer of health ([article](#))
- COVID-19 outbreak total jumps to 22 at Penetanguishene superjail ([article](#))
- School boards elaborate on January plans ([article](#))
- Mayor Jeff Lehman issues 4x4 challenge to Barrie residents, containing four things to do each of the minimum four weeks that Barrie will spend in the red zone ([article](#))
- Council puts new restrictions on Orillia retailers, effective Saturday ([article](#))
- Downtown bus terminal will be available as a warming centre ([article](#))
- Barrie hospital has reached 'critical juncture' with COVID, says president ([article](#))
- City urges businesses to comply with red-zone restrictions ([article](#))
- Midland hospital outbreak total rises by 2 ([article](#))
- Merry COVID Christmas! Barrie families share how they'll be celebrating while staying apart ([article](#))

## Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

<b>Ontario</b> (As of December 23, 2020, 10:30)			
<b>Total cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Recovered</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
162,663	19,424	139,010	4,229
<b>Highlights:</b> Since the last update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 16,000 more people have been infected with COVID-19, approximately 13,600 people have recovered and 194 people have died.</li> <li>• There are approximately 2,300 more active cases in the province compared to the same day last week.</li> <li>• In the last day there has been an increase of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2,408 new cases</li> <li>○ 2,243 resolved cases</li> <li>○ 41 deaths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Of the new cases reported today, 629 are in Toronto, 448 are in Peel Region, 234 are in Windsor-Essex, 190 are in York Region, and 150 are in Hamilton.</li> </ul>			

- There are currently 1,002 people hospitalized with 275 in ICU of which 186 are on ventilators.
- With 56,660 tests processed over the last 24 hours, the per cent positivity rate today is 4.8%, down slightly from 5.1% at this point last week.
- There are now 173 active outbreaks of COVID-19 in Ontario long-term care homes, 38 more outbreaks than the number recorded one week ago.

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](#)

<b>Canada</b> (As of December 22, 2020 at 19:00 EDT)			
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Recovered</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
521,509	75,523	431,561	14,425

**Highlights:**

- On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Canada reported a previous day increase of:
  - 6,195 new cases
  - 93 deaths
- New daily cases were reported in ON (2,202), QC (2,183), AB (1,021), BC (433) SK (181), MB (155), NS (7)
- New deaths were reported in QC (28), ON (21) BC (12), AB (11), MB (18), and SK (3).
- National highlights from the last published reporting week of December 6 to December 12:
  - In Canada, there was an average of 6,569 new daily cases reported, representing a 4% increase compared to the previous week (week of November 29 to December 5).
  - All provinces and territories reported new cases.
  - Manitoba reported the highest age-standardized incidence rate (172.5 cases per 100,000 population).
  - Yukon observed the largest increase in age-standardized incidence rate compared to the previous week (from 0.0 to 48.7 cases per 100,000 population).
  - British Columbia observed the largest decrease in age standardized incidence rate compared to the previous week (from 148.0 to 91.3 cases per 100,000 population).
  - Incidence rates for all age groups combined, decreased compared to the previous week (91.9 to 82.2 per 100,000 population). Age specific incidence rates decreased in all age groups, and the largest decrease was observed among those aged 80 years and older (148.1 to 130.3 per 100,000 population), followed by those 20 to 29 years of age (124.9 to 108.9 per 100,000 population). These two age groups (80+ years and 20-29 years of age) continue to have the highest age specific incidence rates.
  - Long-term care/retirement residences have been the most common setting for outbreaks in Canada every month, except September during the return to school period.
  - The average number of daily deaths reported increased compared to the average from the previous week (from an average 88 to 110 daily deaths).
  - On 12 December, there were 3,151 cases hospitalized and 649 cases in ICU, representing an 11% and 18% increase, respectively, in the daily hospitalized and ICU cases compared to December 5. Based on detailed case information provided to PHAC, the overall cumulative hospitalization rate (including ICU admissions) is 68 cases per 100,000 population, with the highest rates observed in those 80 years of age and older (525 cases per 100,000 population).

- According to forecasting, between 564,200 and 607,370 cumulative reported cases and 15,290 and 16,210 cumulative numbers of deaths are expected by December 31.

National [daily epidemiology updates](#); National [weekly epidemiology report](#)  
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/surv-covid19-weekly-epi-update-20201211-eng.pdf>

<b>Global</b> (As of December 23, 2020 at 9:44am CET)	
<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	<b>Confirmed Deaths</b>
76,382,044	1,702,128
<p>Global weekly epidemiological update as of December 20<sup>th</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past week, new COVID-19 cases and deaths continued to increase to approximately 4.6 million new cases and over 79,000 new deaths.</li> <li>• New COVID-19 cases and deaths continued to increase during the past week, by 6% and 4% respectively.</li> <li>• The Region of the Americas again accounted for the greatest proportion, reporting over 2.3 million new cases (half of the global cumulative).</li> <li>• The European Region reported the highest number of new deaths (36,286; 46%) in the past week.</li> <li>• The African Region accounted for the greatest relative increase in new cases (27%) and deaths (34%) compared to the previous week.</li> <li>• Increasing trends were also observed in the Western Pacific Region, while the South-East Asia and Eastern Mediterranean Regions were the only two that reported a decrease in both cases and deaths.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard</a>; <a href="#">Previous Situation Reports</a></p>	

## Provincial, National and Global Updates *(Since Dec. 17, 2020 Partner Update)*

### ***Provincial Updates***

#### The Ontario Government:

- Ontario supports non-profits delivering vital services ([news release](#))
- Ontario cancelling passenger road tests across Ontario ([news release](#))
- Safer at Home programs provide relief to Ontario families ([news release](#))
- Ontario announces provincewide shutdown to stop spread of COVID-19 and save lives ([news release](#))
- Ontario building on supports for employers during COVID-19 ([backgrounder](#))
- Ontario caps food delivery fees to protect small businesses ([news release](#))

#### Other Provincial News:

- Health-care workers lining up for COVID-19 vaccine, but some warn of 'real troubles' with hesitancy ([article](#))
- Doug Ford says international travelers pose 'extreme risk' for COVID-19 spread. Here are the facts ([article](#))
- Ontario shutdown won't stop COVID-19 spread in workplaces, health experts say ([article](#))
- Ontario lockdown doesn't do anything to help warehouse workers, says advocate ([article](#))
- Here's what will be allowed and not allowed under Ontario's provincewide lockdown ([article](#))
- Ontario only jurisdiction in North America to close ski areas during COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Teachers and students advised to be ready for remote learning exclusively in the new year: Province wants to ensure all boards are prepared for all scenarios ([article](#))



- Ontario Hospital Association calling on harder-hit regions, like Simcoe-Muskoka, to face four-week total lockdown ([article](#))
- Province investing \$1.9 billion annually to bolster long-term care ([article](#))
- These nursing home chains have the highest COVID-19 death rates in Ontario ([article](#))
- Hudson's Bay goes to court to challenge 'irrational' retail lockdown rules in Ontario ([article](#))

### ***National Updates***

From the Government of Canada:

- FedDev Ontario investments support businesses and spur innovation and growth amid the global pandemic ([news release](#))
- National Research Council of Canada supports development of 4 COVID-19 therapeutic candidates ([news release](#))
- Dartmouth-based company pioneers new remote monitoring service for virus management helping businesses screen for COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- [Statement](#) on the U.S. authorization of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
- Government of Canada COVID-19 Update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Government announces wage subsidy rate increase to 75 per cent ([news release](#))
- Government of Canada rolling out \$100M in added support to food security organizations during COVID-19 pandemic ([news release](#))
- Information about COVID-19 in the Ontario Region ([news release](#))
- Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada on [December 21<sup>st</sup>](#), [December 19<sup>th</sup>](#), [December 18<sup>th</sup>](#), [December 17<sup>th</sup>](#)

Other National News:

- New COVID-19 Variant not yet identified in Canada: Tam ([article](#))
- Federal lab says COVID-19 variant may be in country undetected ([article](#))
- Feds say COVID-19 controls are sufficient despite complaints from Ontario ([article](#))
- Trudeau urges COVID-19 vigilance over the holidays ([article](#))
- Ottawa didn't give you CERB 'to then claw it back', Trudeau tells anxious recipients: About 441,000 people have received letters from the CRA questioning their eligibility for CERB and warning they may owe back some of the payments ([article](#))
- Number of Canadians on EI surges to record after CERB transfer ([article](#))
- No cash going to provinces that don't agree to improve standards at long-term care home, Trudeau hints ([article](#))
- Unease amid the joy: Most Canadians willing to get COVID-19 vaccine, but some worry about side effects ([article](#))
- CSIS warns of threats to vaccine distribution chain ([article](#))
- There have been more than 7 million entries into Canada since COVID-19 began. CBSA explains why ([article](#))
- Businesses weigh cost of paid sick leave as coronavirus rips through workplaces ([article](#))

### ***Global Updates***

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- COVAX [Announces](#) additional deals to access promising COVID-19 vaccine candidates; plans global rollout starting Q1 2020
- [Statement](#) of the WHO Working Group on COVID-19 Animal Models (WHO-COM) about the UK and South African SARS-CoV-2 new variants
- COVID-19 - [Landscape](#) of novel coronavirus candidate vaccine development worldwide
- Weekly epidemiological update – [22 December 2020](#)

- WHO and YouTube have partnered on a [public service announcement](#) to help battle COVID-19 fatigue
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the living and working conditions of refugees and migrants according to a new [WHO study](#), launched on 18 December, International Migrants Day.

#### WHO Publications:

- [Emergency Use Designation of COVID-19 candidate vaccines: Ethical considerations](#)
- [Emergency Global Supply Chain System \(COVID-19\) catalogue](#)
- [Therapeutics and COVID-19: living guideline](#)
- [COVID-19 diagnostic testing in the context of international travel](#)
- [Risk assessment tool to inform mitigation measures for international travel in the context of COVID-19](#)

### 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:

#### Vaccine and Immunization

- **Revised:** [Vaccine Rollout](#)
- **Added:** [Health Unit Plans for Immunization](#)

#### Operating your Business Safely

- **Added:** guidance for [Ice Hut operators](#)
- **Revised:** [Guidance for Malls and shopping centres](#)

#### School Administrators and Educators / Families

- **Revised:** [Return to School Protocol](#) for employees

#### Assessment Centres and Testing

- **Revised** to include Holiday hours for centres
- **Added** information about Southlake Assessment Centre for the community of [Bradford](#)

- 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.
- Holiday Closures: Friday December 25, 2020 and January 1, 2021

### Credible Sources of Information

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