

COVID-19 Update for Partners

March 10, 2021

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Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

Return to Red – Control zone

- Simcoe Muskoka moved back into the **Red – Control** zone on Monday. I recommended this to the province as our overall cases of COVID-19 have declined over the past two weeks, despite the rise in the B.1.1.7 (U.K.) variant. This also reflects the need to balance the impacts of the lockdown on businesses, income, physical and mental health, and access to services.
- While our overall cases have gone down, the proportion of cases that are a Variant of Concern (VOC) has continued to increase, with 66% of cases last week being a VOC. Given the presence of the VOC, it is of critical importance that we be diligent in maintaining our public health measures.
- With the presence of VOC, it is also possible that cases could increase again and that further protective measures may be needed. We will continue to monitor this very closely.
- We are proceeding with additional orders to enhance protection to the community including a revised [Class Order for Self-Isolation](#) and a revised [Class Order for Service Providers of Vulnerable Settings](#).
- I will also be issuing a letter of instruction to workplaces and businesses to strengthen awareness of employment standards related to COVID-19 and to enable the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) to enforce these standards.

Vaccine update

- We have had a very successful first week of community immunization clinics, made possible by the tremendous efforts of our municipal and community partners.
- Clinics remain open **by appointment only** to priority groups: Seniors 85+, Indigenous adults; Adult recipients of chronic home care; and very high priority health care workers.
- Those who don't meet the criteria will be turned away and no walk-ins will be accommodated. Appointments and the waitlist are full through to March 16.
- The provincial vaccine appointment booking system and call centre are set to launch on March 15. Our local webpages will be adapted to accommodate this – we will share more information as we carry out this transition.
- Simcoe Muskoka has been identified a provincial hot spot for COVID-19 and, as a result, we will be receiving additional doses of the vaccine.

- The province is expecting vaccine supply to increase later this month, including AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines. The province has extended the intervals between the two doses for COVID-19 vaccines. The second dose can now be given up to four months after the first. This means we can give more people a first dose in a shorter timeframe, thereby protecting more residents.
- We will continue to provide second doses on the original interval schedule to residents in long-term care (LTC), retirement homes, elder care, and assisted living.

Wastewater surveillance update

- The University of Ottawa and the Ministry of the Environment have been analyzing wastewater samples from Barrie, Orillia, Collingwood, and Midland for COVID-19 and also analyzing samples from the City of Barrie for VOC.
- In the City of Barrie, fluctuating levels of VOC have been found over the past 1.5 months and these findings correlate with the information we have about reported cases. The most recent sample from February 25th shows non-detectable levels of VOC.
- Wastewater samples analyzed from Collingwood, Midland and Orillia have not found detectable levels of COVID-19 which correlates with low levels of cases in these regions.

One year into the COVID-19 pandemic

- As of March 11, it will be one year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. In this time, more than 6,700 Simcoe Muskoka residents have been infected, there have been 190 deaths, and many others have been forced into isolation to protect others.
- We've also seen our lives change immensely. We've missed being together with loved ones, many people have lost income or businesses, and children have lost long stretches of in-person education time. The pandemic has been extremely hard and impacted us all.
- There is light at the end of the tunnel – with vaccines now available from four sources and with public health measures, we have the tools we need to reduce transmission.
- We are working as fast as we can with the supply we are given to immunize our residents. We are already seeing a dramatic improvement in outbreaks, infection, and mortality in our LTC and retirement homes.
- Given how hard this year has been, it is easy to get down or angry, but I want to remind people to be kind to themselves and to others as we work together to bring the pandemic under control. I am confident that we will be in a much safer, happier, and healthier place later this year.

Previous media briefings are on the SMDHU [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel.

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of March 10, 2021 14:00)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
6,801	357	6,178	190
<p><u>In the last day:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39 people tested positive, 35 people recovered, and there were no new deaths. • There were 37 new variant cases* identified. <p><u>Currently:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 108 new cases reported to the Health Unit for the current week. • 20 people are hospitalized for COVID-19. • There are 18 ongoing outbreaks (workplaces: 6, institutional settings: 6, educational settings: 4, community settings: 2). 8 of these outbreaks have known variant cases. • There are 142 active variant cases*. 			

Since the last Partner Update:

- We have reported 247 new cases, 298 recoveries, and 1 new death.
- There are 74 fewer active cases.
- There are 10 fewer active outbreaks compared to the same day last week.
- We now have confirmed cases for 3 VOCs, with 4 confirmed cases of the P.1 (Brazil) variant and 1 confirmed case of the B.1.351 (South Africa) variant identified in the past week.
- There was a 20% decrease in new cases reported during the week of February 28 compared to the previous week.

For more local data, see: SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#), [COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#), [Provincial COVID-19 Response Framework – Status of Simcoe Muskoka](#)

*Variant cases encompass confirmed VOC cases and positive screens for a VOC. Caution should be taken when interpreting these data due to potential sampling biases and delay between sample collection and sequencing in recent weeks.

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Vaccine Data (As of March 10, 2021 14:00)

Total doses administered	Doses administered previous day
51,675	777

Highlights:

- 7,597 immunizations have been provided since the last Partner Update.
- 3,000 LTC residents, 3,429 retirement home residents, and nearly 3,800 seniors 85+ living in the community have received their first dose.
- More than 15,700 people have received both required doses of the vaccine, including:
 - Over 5,300 hospital workers and residents in alternate level of care;
 - Nearly 5,000 LTC and retirement home staff and essential caregivers;
 - Nearly 2,800 LTC residents, and;
 - Over 2,400 retirement home residents.

Local Media Updates (Since March 3, 2021 Partner Update)

- Moderna, AstraZeneca vaccines on the way for Simcoe Muskoka ([article](#))
- Results still unavailable for asymptomatic testing in Simcoe County schools ([article](#))
- Barrie Council gives tentative approval to launch patio season in a few weeks ([article](#))
- Chamber calls on businesses to offer services during wider vaccine rollout ([article](#))
- Seniors roll up their sleeves in Innisfil for the COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- Variant still a wildcard, Gardner urges continued diligence ([article](#))
- Barrie Transit driver tests positive for COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Easing small business restrictions, paid sick days could have councillors' support ([article](#))
- 'Polarizing' pandemic: some businesses thrive, others struggle to survive ([article](#))
- Support and anger directed at Barrie salons that opened during lockdown ([article](#))
- 103-year-old Elder among those receiving COVID vaccine on Wahta First Nation ([article](#))
- Residents of The Elden celebrate their COVID-19 shots ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

Ontario (As of March 10, 2021, 10:30)			
Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
312,428	11,311	294,018	7,099

As of today:

- There were 1,316 new cases, 1,212 resolved cases, and 16 deaths in the last day.

- There are a total of 921 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 39 cases of the South African variant, and 17 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- A total of 678 people are hospitalized for COVID-19, 281 people are in intensive care units (ICU) and 178 people are on ventilators.
- There are 545 ongoing outbreaks (health care settings: 151, schools and childcares: 116, workplaces: 113, congregate living: 83, other settings: 82).

Since the last Partner Update:

- There have been 8,665 new cases, 7,666 recoveries, and 85 deaths.
- There are 914 more active cases compared to the same day last week.
- There has been an increase of 369 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 12 cases of the South African variant, and 14 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- The average number of weekly cases is 1,238.

Vaccine status:

- A total of 978,797 vaccines doses have been administered to date, with 35,264 doses administered yesterday.
- 279,204 people in Ontario have been fully vaccinated.

Regional updates:

- Areas with the highest number of active cases per 100,000 population:
 - Thunder Bay District (289.69), Peel (164.14), Brant County (148.21), and Toronto (131.54).
- Areas with the highest number of active cases:
 - Toronto (3,593), Peel (2,268), York (802), and Ottawa (529).

Weekly Epidemiological Summary highlights: February 21-27, 2021:

- Weekly COVID-19 cases increased by 167 compared to the previous week. This is the first increase in weekly cases seen since the start of January.
- The rate of cases among those <20 years of age has been increasing steadily since February 7th. This may be associated with recent outbreaks in educational settings.
- A VOC has been identified by over half of public health units in Ontario.

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

Canada (As of March 9, 2021 at 19:00 EDT)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
893,518	30,179	841,035	22,304

Yesterday:

- Canada reported 2,826 new cases and 21 deaths.
- New cases were reported in all provinces and territories except PEI, NWT, NT and YT.
- Deaths were reported in BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, and NB.

Since the last Partner Update:

- In the last week, 20,771 people tested positive for COVID-19, 259 people died, and 20,585 people recovered.
- There are 73 fewer active cases of COVID-19 than there was a week ago.

Between February 22 and March 1, 2021:

- The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized decreased from 1,791 to 1,646.
- The number of COVID-19 patients in ICU beds increased from 558 to 569.

- The number of COVID-19 patients mechanically vented decreased from 323 to 308.

Weekly epidemiology update: February 21-27, 2021:

- New cases increased by 5% compared to the previous week, with an average of 3,005 new cases every day. This is the first increase in weekly cases since early January.
- New deaths decreased by 16% compared to the previous week, with an average of 47 new deaths every day.
- Since early January 2021, the number of hospitalizations have continued to decrease each week, while ICU admissions have remained relatively stable.
- Daily case rates remain highest among those 20-39 years of age. The 80 years and older group now has the second lowest case rates in Canada.
- According to forecasting, between 890,290 to 923,620 cumulative reported cases and 22,080 to 22,820 deaths are expected by March 14, 2021.

Key vaccine updates: As of February 27, 2021

- 3.63% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, including:
 - 18.96% of adults aged 80 or older;
 - 52.80% of health care workers targeted for priority vaccination, and;
 - 85.29% of adults living in group living settings for seniors.
- 1.42% of population have received both required doses of the vaccine.

For more national data, see: [Daily epidemiology updates](#) and [Weekly epidemiology report](#)

Global (As of March 10, 2021 at 10:16 CET)	
Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
117,132,788	2,600,839

In the last day:

- There were 366,783 new cases and 6,241 deaths.
- The U.S., Brazil, India, Italy, and Turkey reported the most new cases and Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Mexico, and Italy reported the most deaths.

In the past week:

- Over 2.8 million new cases and 61,412 deaths were reported.
- Brazil, the U.S., France, Italy, and India reported the most new cases and the U.S., Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and Italy reported the most new deaths.

Highlights from Weekly Epidemiological Summary as of March 7, 2021:

- The number of new COVID-19 cases increased by 2% compared to the previous week. Increased cases were reported in the Eastern Mediterranean, African Region, and Europe, while declining cases were seen in the Americas, South-East Asia, and Western Pacific regions.
- The number of reported new deaths continues to decline, with a 6% global decline in new deaths compared to the previous week.

For more international data, see: [WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#) and [Weekly Epidemiological and Operational Updates](#)

Provincial, National and Global Updates (Since March 3, 2021 Partner Update)

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Pharmacies and primary care to begin offering COVID-19 vaccinations ([news release](#))

- Establishes tourism economic recovery taskforce ([news release](#))
- Takes further action to protect homeless shelters during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Completes first-dose vaccinations in Northern Indigenous communities ([news release](#))
- Is ready to roll out Phase Two of COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan ([news release](#))
- Toronto, Peel and North Bay-Parry Sound return to response framework ([news release](#))
- Provides additional support for municipalities during COVID-19 ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario published:

- Updated: Trends of COVID-19 Incidence in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Type of mask required or recommended for the public to control transmission of SARS-CoV-2 with consideration of variants of concern ([environmental scan](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification ([report](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Ontario staring down possible third wave, but severity remains unclear ([article](#))
- Proposals to protect Ontario LTC residents were rejected as 'too expensive' ([article](#))
- Ontario Police College outbreak reaches more than 100 cases ([article](#))
- Advocacy group asks Ontario court to halt federal hotel quarantine policy ([article](#))
- Pressure mounts on Conservatives to bolster Ottawa's sick leave program ([article](#))
- Critics worry Ontario's vaccination booking system is open to abuse ([article](#))
- COVID-19 vaccinations in Ontario LTC homes have saved hundreds of lives ([article](#))
- Head of Ontario task force says province could finish first doses by June 20 ([article](#))
- Union says health care workers still struggling to get enough PPE ([article](#))
- Lineups, other snags put a spotlight on how to make vaccines more accessible ([article](#))
- Program to help vulnerable households with rent comes up short ([article](#))
- Ontario residents aged 60-64 to receive Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- Ontario to extend COVID-19 vaccine intervals after change in federal guidance ([article](#))
- Freezer failures and damaged vials behind wasted vaccines in Ontario ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- COVID-19 update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Health Canada authorizes Janssen COVID-19 vaccine ([statement](#))
- National Defence invests in Canadian solutions to COVID-19 challenges ([news release](#))
- Modified COVID-19 vaccines for variants to be fast-tracked ([news release](#))
- Supports recovery, growth of ON women-led businesses amid pandemic ([news release](#))
- Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada: [March 4](#), [March 5](#), [March 6](#), [March 7](#), [March 8](#), [March 9](#), [March 10](#)

Other National News:

- Trudeau says Johnson & Johnson's vaccine is facing production delays ([article](#))
- Canadian universities announce plans for in-class learning in September ([article](#))
- Experts warn of COVID-19 scams preying on pandemic fears, vaccine shortages ([article](#))
- Outbreak declared at another B.C. care home where residents were vaccinated ([article](#))
- Canadians shouldn't shop around for vaccines with higher efficacy rates ([article](#))
- Quebec to go against national advice and give AstraZeneca to 65+ ([article](#))
- Alberta asking for proposals to build its own vaccine manufacturing industry ([article](#))
- Health Canada approves 4th COVID-19 vaccine as Pfizer accelerates deliveries ([article](#))
- Trudeau sticks to September timeline despite new vaccines and doses ([article](#))
- Here's what we know about COVID-19 vaccines and children ([article](#))
- Women in low-wage occupations hit hardest by COVID-19 pandemic ([article](#))

Global Updates

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Director General highlights that “One of our main priorities now is to increase the ambition of COVAX to help all countries end the pandemic. This means urgent action to ramp up [vaccine] production” and presents four key strategies to increase production. ([Remarks at March 5 media briefing](#))
- Director General continues to emphasize the need for vaccine equity “the first round of allocations covers between 2 and 3 percent of the population of countries receiving vaccines through COVAX, while other countries progress towards vaccinating their entire population within the next few months. Countries are not in a race with each other, this is a common race against the virus.” ([Remarks at Member States Information Session](#))

WHO published:

- Special Focus: Global influenza surveillance and response system – best practices for integrating influenza and COVID-19 sentinel surveillance ([Weekly Epi Update p.4-6](#))
- Special Focus: Update: SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern ([Weekly Epi Update p.10-16](#))
- Subcommittee meeting to review reports of influenza-like illness in individuals vaccinated against COVID-19 ([statement](#))
- Oxford University and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine ([background document](#))
- Science in 5, Episode #28: *Evolution of the SARS-CoV-2 virus* ([video](#))

Other International News:

- Significantly higher death rate reported for variant first detected in the U.K. ([article](#))
- WHO warns against countries relaxing efforts in fight against COVID-19 ([article](#))
- World no closer to answer on COVID-19 origins despite WHO investigation ([article](#))
- U.S. is close to a possible COVID-19 surge, expert warns ([article](#))
- Rich countries undercutting COVAX’s ability to get vaccines to developing world ([article](#))
- People fully vaccinated can gather indoors without masks, U.S. CDC says ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

SMDHU [website](#) – recent changes include:

Main COVID

- Updated main paragraph to reflect Simcoe Muskoka being in the **Red – Control** zone
- Posted [March 6, 2021 letter](#) from Dr. Gardner regarding lifting the lockdown order
- Posted revised [Class Order for Self-isolation](#) and [Class Order for Service Providers of Vulnerable Settings](#) issued March 8, 2021

Stop the Spread

- Updated expander bar “[Close contact, gatherings, and events](#)” with new capacity limits
- Updated content under expander bar “[How to attend a wedding, funeral or religious ceremony safely](#)” to reflect **Red – Control** zone guidance

Vaccine and Immunization

- Updated content under expander bar “[Offers of assistance](#)”

Operating your Business Safely

- Updated main paragraph to reflect Simcoe Muskoka being in the **Red – Control** zone
- Posted [March 6, 2021 letter](#) from Dr. Gardner regarding lifting the lockdown order
- Updated the following expander bars to reflect **Red – Control** zone measures and guidance documents:

- [Resources for All Employers and Workplaces](#)
- [Curling Clubs](#)
- [Day Camps](#)
- [Food Operators](#)
- [Ice Hut Operators](#)
- [Indoor and outdoor events and gatherings](#)
- [Malls and Shopping Centres](#)
- [Outdoor Recreational Amenities](#)
- [Personal Service Settings](#)
- [Recreational Water Facilities](#)

Partners and Municipalities

- Updated main paragraph to reflect Simcoe Muskoka being in the **Red – Control** zone
- Posted [March 6, 2021 letter](#) from Dr. Gardner regarding lifting the lockdown order
- Posted revised [Class Order for Self-Isolation](#) and [Class Order for Service Providers of Vulnerable Settings](#) issued March 8, 2021
- Added new expander bar with COVID-19 guidance for “[Electoral Candidates](#)”
- Updated the following expander bars to reflect **Red – Control** zone measures and guidance documents:
 - [Day Camps](#)
 - [Farmers’ Markets](#)
 - [Food Banks and Donation Centres](#)
 - [Outdoor Ice Surfaces/Rinks and Outdoor Skating Trails](#)
 - [Outdoor Recreational Amenities](#)
 - [Places of Worship](#)

New HealthFAXes:

- **March 8, 2021:** [COVID-19: Update #31 – Revised: Regional VOC Strategy, New: SMDHU Medical Offer of Health Order re: Service Provision to Vulnerable Individuals](#)
- **March 4, 2021:** [COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #8 – COVID-19 Vaccination Appointment & Wait List are Temporarily FULL](#)

Additional SMDHU resources:

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#)
- [SMDHU Vulnerable Populations for COVID-19 Response Interactive Map](#) highlights vulnerable populations in Simcoe Muskoka.
- 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 - 8:30am-6pm; Saturday - 8:30am-4:30pm

Credible Sources of Information

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