

COVID-19 Update for Partners

December 2, 2021

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Local Issues

New variant of concern – Omicron

- Last week, the World Health Organization announced a new variant which has been classified as a variant of concern named Omicron. Globally, research is being conducted to understand how Omicron compares to Delta and other variants regarding its transmissibility, the severity of illness it causes, immune escape and the effectiveness of vaccines against it.
- As of Dec. 1, there have been seven confirmed cases of the Omicron variant in Canada, with four reported in Ontario and one case reported in each of Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec.
- **Currently we have no reported cases of this variant in Simcoe Muskoka.** The health unit is closely monitoring the situation and will update the public when new variants are detected in our region.
- To deal with this new variant, the province is enhancing testing and surveillance by expanding the number of testing locations throughout the province and conducting genomic sequencing on all positive COVID-19 samples. The federal government has also implemented enhanced travel measures.
- The most up-to-date information on Omicron is available on the [World Health Organization website](#).

Vaccination Update

- Our region faces the dual concern of a current surge of Delta plus the new risk of Omicron. With the current surge, along with more indoor and social interactions amongst non-household members taking place as we enter the holiday season, I urge all eligible residents of Simcoe Muskoka to get vaccinated as soon as possible, including those who are eligible for a third or booster dose, and children 5-11 years of age.
- Don't wait, now is the time to get vaccinated. Visit our [website](#) for information about when and where you can get vaccinated.

Outbreaks

- The incidence of cases and number of outbreaks in our region has exceeded the health unit's capacity to respond to them to the full extent. With written assurance from the province for the coverage of COVID-related costs now and in 2022, we have begun recruiting and expanding our staff base for the COVID-19 response.
- Provincial case and contact management support (including provincial contact tracers, case managers and a [virtual assistant tool](#)) are being used to do case and contact management. Also, to reduce the

amount of information that we collect from people who are newly infected, they are asked to advise their contacts of the need to quarantine and obtain testing, as we focus on exposures and potential outbreaks in schools, congregate settings, and larger outbreaks.

- We are encouraging workplaces who have people infected with COVID-19 to go to the [website](#) for guidance and resources to learn how they can mitigate further transmission in their workplace.

Open Letter to Community to help reduce transmission

- Due to the high incidence of COVID-19 in Simcoe Muskoka, there is the potential that an additional Letter of Instruction (LOI) could be issued to reduce capacity limits, as other health units experiencing case and severity surges have done. Other health units experiencing case surges have taken the step of reducing capacity limits in their regions in various settings.
- We are seeking to avoid reducing capacity limits, by calling upon businesses, organizations, and individuals to do all they can to avoid the need for this LOI to be implemented. A formal letter will be shared publicly Dec 3, 2021 (available on our [website](#)) outlining, reiterating, and reminding organizations, businesses and individuals of the public health measures required that will help us to see a reversal in the case incidence rate across our region.

Request for SMDHU Notification of Larger Sporting and Recreational Events

- As of Nov. 26, 2021, businesses and organizations are requested to **notify the health unit at least two weeks in advance of larger sporting and recreational events** where activities and/or events take place at multiple venues, occur over multiple days and/or having an attendance of **over 1000 persons** (including participants, spectators, and staff). This will allow SMDHU to help ensure that these events follow regulatory and local requirements and assist with how to proceed in the safest manner for everyone involved to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in our community. For more information, please see the [letter](#) outlining the request from SMDHU's medical officer of health.

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

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Data <i>(as of Dec 2, 2021)</i>					
Total Confirmed Cases	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New cases Nov 21-27 (% change from previous week)	Total deaths (# change from previous week)	Current Hospitalizations (# change from previous week)	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated (Target 90%)
15,806	655 (+30%)	500 (+21%)	278 (+0)	31 (+3)	85%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 500 new cases reported last week, 59% were unvaccinated, 3% were partially vaccinated, and 37% were fully vaccinated. • The incidence rate of COVID-19 infection for unvaccinated people is 1074 cases (per 100,000 people) compared to 153 (per 100,000 people) for fully vaccinated people • The rate of hospitalization for unvaccinated people is 68 (per 100,000 people) compared to 5.1 (per 100,000 people) for people who are fully vaccinated. • From October 3rd to November 27th, the rate of COVID-19 infection among the unvaccinated vaccine-eligible Simcoe Muskoka population is 7 times higher than it is for the fully vaccinated population and the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations is 13 times higher. • There are 30 active outbreaks (up from 26 last week), including 23 in educational settings. <p>More local data available at: SMDHU COVID-19 HealthSTATS page and COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard</p>					

Local Media Updates (Since Nov 25, 2021, Partner Update)

- Health unit provides updates on unprecedented school closure in Muskoka, Omicron and rising COVID-19 rates ([article](#))
- If COVID cases don't slow, added restrictions could be on the way: Gardner ([article](#))
- Vaccinated RVH pediatrician 'absolutely shocked' to test positive for COVID-19 ([article](#))
- COVID-19 outbreak confirmed in an Orillia hospital medical unit ([article](#))
- Town of Wasaga Beach slams social media posts about COVID-19 outbreak ([article](#))
- 12 Sudbury Wolves test positive for COVID following Barrie game ([article](#))
- COVID outbreak at Barrie Bayside Mission officially over ([article](#))
- Month-long COVID outbreak declared over at south-end Barrie church ([article](#))
- Proof of COVID vaccination required for Collingwood G&M Hospital visitors ([article](#))
- Huntsville's Spruce Glen Public School closed due to COVID-19 outbreak ([article](#))
- 'You will be double vaccinated': Collingwood approves mandatory vaccination policy ([article](#))
- Ontario opens up COVID testing for travellers returning from 7 African countries ([article](#))
- What we know so far about the Omicron variant, which has been found in Canada ([article](#))
- WHO warns that new virus variant poses 'very high' risk ([article](#))
- Services were temporarily suspended at Barrie church after a COVID-19 outbreak was declared ([article](#))
- OSMH President/CEO provides an update on COVID to community ([article](#))
- Muskoka Shores staff members in Gravenhurst celebrate 100 per cent vaccination rate ([article](#))
- Holiday virus precautions depend on vaccination status, symptoms: Province ([article](#))
- Wasaga Beach reopens town hall amid COVID-19 outbreak, 20 employees infected , including mayor ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Data

Ontario <small>(As of Dec 2, 2021)</small>					
Total Cases	Active Cases <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	New cases Nov 26-Dec 2 <small>(% change from previous week)</small>	Total deaths <small>(change from previous week)</small>	Current Hospitalizations <small>(change from previous week)</small>	Residents 12+ fully vaccinated* <small>(Target 90%)</small>
620,229	6,932 <small>(+25%)</small>	5,959 <small>(+23%)</small>	10,012 <small>(+27)</small>	291 <small>(+34)</small>	87%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 5,959 new cases in the past week, 50% are unvaccinated, 3% are partially vaccinated, 42% are fully vaccinated and 6% have an unknown vaccination status. • In Ontario, unvaccinated individuals are five times more likely to get infected with COVID, 16 times more likely to be hospitalized and 29 times more likely to be a patient in the intensive care unit compared with people who are vaccinated. • Areas with the highest rate of active cases per 100,000 population are: Algoma (282), Timiskaming (150), Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (139), Sudbury and District (137), and Windsor-Essex County (137) <p>For more national data, see Ontario COVID-19 case data, Public Health Ontario Data Tool, daily and weekly epidemiologic summaries</p>					

Canada (as of Dec 2, 2021)				
Total Cases (includes confirmed and probable cases)	Active Cases (% change from previous week)	New Cases in the last 7 days (% change from previous week)	Total Deaths (change from previous week)	Population 12+ fully vaccinated
1,798,872	26,611 (+11%)	21,058 (+16%)	29,737 (+157)	86%
Weekly case highlights for November 14-20, 2021, compared to the previous week:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canada reported a relatively similar number of weekly cases.• In the last week the jurisdictions reporting the highest increases in the number of weekly cases were Prince Edward Island (+129%), Yukon (+31%), and Ontario (+14%).• The jurisdictions with the highest incidence rate per 100,000 are Northwest Territories (576), Manitoba (154), and Yukon (122).				
For more national data, see: COVID-19 daily epidemiology update , Canada COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiology Report				
Global (as of 17:51 pm CET, 2 December 2021)				
Total confirmed cases	New Cases Nov 8-15 (% change from previous week)		Total Deaths (Change from previous week)	
262,866,050	4,006,138 (+6%)		5,224,519 (-9%)	
Weekly highlights for November 22-28				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Globally, weekly case incidence plateaued, while weekly deaths decreased by 10%.• The European Region and Western Pacific Region and Africa all reported increases in new weekly cases, with the European Region and the Region of the Americas continue to report the highest weekly case incidence per 100,000 population.• In the last week the highest number of cases were reported in: United States, Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Russia.				
For more international data, see: WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard and WHO weekly epidemiological and Operational Updates				

Provincial, National and Global Updates (since Nov 25, 2021, Partner Update)

Provincial Updates

Ontario Government:

- Ontario Accelerating Booster Eligibility to Adults Aged 50+: Province Providing an Extra Layer of Protection Against COVID-19 and Variants ([news release](#))
- Ontario Hits a Major COVID-19 Vaccine Milestone: Ninety per cent of Ontarians aged 12 and over have received at least one dose of a vaccine ([statement](#))
- Ontario Confirms First Two Cases of Omicron Variant ([statement](#))

Public Health Ontario recently updated the following reports:

- COVID-19 Variant of Concern Omicron (B.1.1.529): Risk Assessment ([report](#))

National Updates

Government of Canada:

- StatsCan released Changes in fertility intentions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic ([link](#))

- First case of SARS-CoV-2 detected in Canadian wildlife ([news release](#))
- Government of Canada introduces additional measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern ([news release](#))
- Online Courses Provide Guidance on Safe Return to Work During COVID-19 Pandemic ([news release](#))
- Minister Duclos on first cases of Omicron variant of concern in Canada ([statement](#))
- Public Health Agency of Canada on the Omicron variant of concern found in Ontario ([statement](#))
- Government of Canada introduces new measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern ([news release](#))
- Chief Public Health Officer on November 26, 2021 ([speech](#), [statement](#))
- Remarks by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance On the Introduction of Bill C-2 ([speech](#))
- Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada - Importance of COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnant, Recently Pregnant and Breastfeeding People ([statement](#))
- Government of Canada Announces Funding for COVID-19 Safe Voluntary Isolation Sites in British Columbia ([news release](#))
- Amendments to the Criminal Code to protect health care workers and people seeking access to health services ([backgrounder](#))
- Government of Canada introduces legislation to support workers with ten days of paid sick leave, protect health care workers and finish the fight against COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Amendments to the Canada Labour Code to provide ten days of paid sick leave ([backgrounder](#))
- Canada Emergency Response Benefit Advance Payments ([statement](#) and [backgrounder](#))

International Updates

- World Health Assembly agrees to launch process to develop historic global accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response ([link](#))
- WHO recently held the 5th Infodemic Management Conference: Towards measuring the burden of Infodemic ([link](#) and [report](#))
- WHO recently held a Pandemic Ethics and Policy summit ([link](#))
- WHO released a joint statement on Dose Donations of COVID-19 Vaccines to African Countries ([news release](#))
- WHO provided an update on Omicron ([statement](#)) and information about classifying Omicron as a variant of concern ([statement](#))
- WHO held a press conference on COVID-19 on December 1, 2021 ([video](#))
- WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the Member State Information Session on the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 ([speech](#))
- Who released Enhancing Readiness for Omicron (B.1.1.529): Technical Brief and Priority Actions for Member States ([technical document](#))
- Released a Science in 5 episode on COVID-19 and antibiotics ([video](#))

SMDHU Resources

Recent changes to SMDHU [website](#):

COVID-19 Main Page

- Vaccine clinic volunteers needed ([link](#))
- Close contact fact sheet ([link](#))
- COVID-19 public health guidance: requirements for close contacts and households ([link](#))
- Class Orders and Letters of Instruction ([link](#))
- Class Order for Self-Isolation – Revised November 23, 2021 ([link](#))

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- Addition of Muskoka locations for booster doses ([link](#))
- Getting the vaccine expander bar ([link](#))
- Third doses and boosters ([link](#))
- Pregnant and breastfeeding ([link](#))
- Walk-in schedules for each area ([link](#))

Going to School

- Families ([link](#))
 - Someone in our school community has tested positive for COVID-19 ([link](#))
 - My child is a close contact ([link](#))
 - Instructions for household members ([link](#))
 - COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Self-isolation requirements for children 18 years and younger [English/French](#)
 - COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Requirements for close contacts and households ([graphic version](#))
- School administrators and educators ([link](#))
 - Staff or student is a close contact with someone with COVID-19 ([link](#))
 - Resources for school staff and families ([link](#))

COVID-19 Assessment centres and testing

- Alliston ([link](#))
- Huntsville ([link](#))

Operating your Business Safely/Partners and Municipalities

- Main page: notification required for larger sporting events ([link](#))
- Medical Officer of Health Letter of Instructions ([link](#))
 - letter to faith-based organizations ([link](#))
 - letter to facilities for sports and recreation and outdoor recreation amenities ([link](#))
- COVID-19 guidance for outdoor recreational water facilities ([link](#))

HealthSTATS:

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#)

SMDHU Health Connection:

- 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](#), Monday-Friday - 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- **PLEASE NOTE: We are experiencing high call volumes and our response times are longer than usual.**

Credible Sources of Information

- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Centre for Effective Practice COVID-19 Resource Centre](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)