

## COVID-19 Update for Partners

March 17, 2021

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

#### Vaccine rollout

- The province launched its vaccination booking system on March 15 for adults turning 80 and older this year. As expected, there were some glitches, but they now appear to be resolved.
- The volume of calls and online traffic for the provincial system has been high and some wait times have been long, especially for those calling to book vs. registering online.
- All [Phase 1 priority groups](#), not related to age, must pre-register for an appointment via the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) [website](#). We then provide the province with a list of pre-registrants and they follow up with these individuals on how to book an appointment.
- On our [HealthSTATS](#) page, we have updated the 'Immunization Summary by Priority Group' table located under the 'COVID-19 Immunizations' tab. It now includes the number of doses administered for each eligible Phase 1 group and, where possible, percentages of each group that have been vaccinated.
- Our Associate Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Colin Lee, will be participating on a panel presentation '**Our Health – Covid-19 Vaccination – Saving Lives**' on March 25 at 7:30pm to discuss local vaccine rollout. This will be aired on Rogers TV and livestreamed online – we will be posting details about how to attend on our social media and website.
- We will continue to communicate regularly on immunization and reach out to those in the priority groups about opportunities for vaccination as they arise.

#### Vaccine supply

- **Moderna vaccine** – we received our first shipment on the weekend and are currently using this in mobile/outreach clinics as it is easier to handle than the Pfizer vaccine.
- **Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine** – we expect to receive a significant increase in vaccines next week which will allow for expanded days and hours for our community clinics.
- **AstraZeneca vaccine** – pilot started over the weekend with 9 local primary care settings for people 60-64 years of age. Individuals should not call their health care provider to inquire about this – participating providers will contact eligible clients directly based on limited vaccine supply.

### **Vaccine clinics in Muskoka**

- Some concerns have been raised by Muskoka residents about the availability of vaccination clinics in their communities. I have issued a [letter](#) to local municipal leaders and residents to respond to these concerns.
- We are committed to equitable vaccine distribution, but we are limited by vaccine supply. There are two permanent clinics in Muskoka, including one in Huntsville and Bracebridge. As supply increases, we plan to have pop-up clinics, mobile clinics, and provide vaccine to medical offices in Muskoka.
- In the meantime, the District of Muskoka has partnered with Hammond Transportation Ltd to provide a [free, on-demand bus service](#) that any Muskoka resident can use to get to vaccination clinics in Bracebridge and Huntsville.

### **Follow-up local COVID-19 Impact Survey**

- Last fall, we launched a survey to get resident feedback on the impacts of the pandemic. We are now launching a second, follow-up survey to assess changes over time.
- We will use the information collected to make improvements to the services the SMDHU and community partners offer as well as to advocate to political leaders for changes that will address gaps and concerns identified to help improve the lives of our residents.
- We expect to be ready to share fall survey results sometime in April.
- We hope to hear from a diverse group of residents and are urging our partners to talk with their clients and encourage them to complete the [survey](#).

### **Reminder regarding St. Patrick's Day and holiday gatherings**

- In the past, we have seen measurable increases in COVID-19 cases following holidays. However, with the number of overall cases as well as highly contagious variant cases rising, now is not the time to relax precautions and get together in groups.
- It is important that residents continue to abide by public health guidance. Stick to your household and avoid close contact with everyone else. Wear a mask in public settings when you can't maintain 2-metre distance, wash your hands regularly, monitor yourself and household members for symptoms, and, if needed, self-isolate and get tested.
- We have also reminded restaurant owners about dining capacity limits, seating limits per table, physical distancing requirements, and limits for outdoor gatherings.

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

<b>Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of March 17, 2021 14:00)</b>			
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Recovered</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
7,079	386	6,424	193
<b><u>In the last day:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 44 people tested positive, 43 people recovered, and there were no new deaths.</li><li>• There were 11 new variant cases* identified.</li></ul>			
<b><u>Currently:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There have been 82 new cases reported to the Health Unit for the current week.</li><li>• 22 people are hospitalized for COVID-19.</li><li>• There are 13 ongoing outbreaks (workplaces: 7, educational settings: 3, institutions: 2, community settings: 1). 5 of these active outbreaks have known variant cases.</li><li>• There are 155 active variant cases*.</li></ul>			
<b><u>Since the last Partner Update:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We have reported 278 new cases, 246 recoveries, and 3 new deaths.</li></ul>			

- There are 29 more active cases.
- There are 5 fewer active outbreaks compared to the same day last week.
- There was a 39% increase in new cases reported during the week of March 7 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 17, 2021 14:00)

Total doses administered	Doses administered previous day
58,698	1,263

#### Highlights:

- 7,023 immunizations have been provided since the last Partner Update.
- 3,014 long-term care (LTC) residents, 3,438 retirement home residents, and 6,824 adults 80+ living in the community have received their first dose.
- Nearly 16,300 people have received both required doses of the vaccine, including:
  - Nearly 5,200 hospital workers;
  - Nearly 5,000 LTC and retirement home staff and essential caregivers;
  - Over 2,900 retirement home residents, and;
  - Over 2,800 LTC residents.

### Local Media Updates (Since March 10, 2021 Partner Update)

- COVID variants now dominating local case counts, Medical Officer of Health ([article](#))
- Barrie group plans weekly protest until all restrictions are lifted ([article](#))
- Area retirement homes to share \$317k from province to help cover COVID costs ([article](#))
- Gravenhurst's downtown remains resilient through COVID-19 ([article](#))
- 102-year-old Innisfil resident in good spirits after getting COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- 13 per cent of Simcoe County schools reporting COVID-19 cases ([article](#))
- Video tour of the Collingwood and Wasaga drive-thru vaccine clinics ([article](#))
- New guide released by County shares lessons learned in long-term care in 2020 ([article](#))
- Zero COVID cases reported through first asymptomatic testing in County schools ([article](#))
- 104-year-old Orillia man 'happy' to receive COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- SMDHU reports first confirmed case of South African COVID-19 variant ([article](#))
- Sunny outlook for summer: Gardner reflects on a year of COVID-19 ([article](#))
- For local businesses, year-long pandemic has posed many challenges ([article](#))
- 'It's been a dark year, but I do see brighter days are ahead,' RVH president ([article](#))

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

#### Ontario (As of March 17, 2021, 10:30)

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
321,956	12,512	302,257	7,187

#### As of today:

- There were 1,508 new cases, 1,488 resolved cases, and 14 deaths in the last day.
- There are a total of 1,134 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 47 cases of the South African variant, and 34 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- A total of 741 people are hospitalized for COVID-19, 300 people are in intensive care units (ICU) and 190 people are on ventilators.

- There are 556 ongoing outbreaks (health care settings: 144, schools and childcares: 134, workplaces: 120, congregate living: 88, other settings: 70).

Since the last Partner Update:

- There have been 9,528 new cases, 8,239 recoveries, and 88 deaths.
- There are 1,201 more active cases compared to the same day last week.
- There has been an increase of 213 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 8 cases of the South African variant, and 17 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- There are 63 more people hospitalized, 19 more people in the ICU, and 12 more people on ventilators compared to the same day last week.
- The average number of weekly cases is 1,361.

Vaccine status:

- A total of 1,301,334 vaccines doses have been administered to date, with 58,202 doses administered yesterday. 290,659 people in Ontario have been fully vaccinated.

Regional updates:

- Areas with the highest number of active cases per 100,000 population:
  - Thunder Bay District (293.65), Peel (177.53), Toronto (149.29), Sudbury & District (132.86), and Brant County (117.09).
- Areas with the highest number of active cases:
  - Toronto (4,078), Peel (2,453), York (937), Ottawa (619), and Hamilton (493).

Weekly Epidemiological Summary highlights: February 28-March 6, 2021:

- Weekly COVID-19 cases increased by 265 cases compared to the previous week.
- The rate of cases among those aged 80 and older has decreased dramatically since the start of January. This group accounted for the lowest rate of COVID-19 in any age group during for the past two consecutive weeks.
- The proportion of cases coming from the North West region has increased recently, representing 5.27% of cases this week compared to 1.0% of cases 1 month ago.

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 16, 2021 at 19:00 EDT)

Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
915,868	31,517	861,832	22,519

Yesterday:

- Canada reported 2,822 new cases and 24 deaths.
- New cases were reported in all provinces and territories except NWT, NT and YT.
- Deaths were reported in AB, SK, ON, and QC.

Since the last Partner Update:

- In the last week, 22,350 people tested positive for COVID-19, 215 people died, and 20,797 people recovered.
- There are 1,338 more active cases of COVID-19 than there was a week ago.

Between March 2 and March 9, 2021:

- The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized decreased from 1,592 to 1,584.
- The number of COVID-19 patients in ICU beds decreased from 560 to 548.
- The number of COVID-19 patients mechanically vented decreased from 310 to 302.

Weekly epidemiology update: February 28-March 6, 2021:

- New cases decreased by 6% compared to the previous week, with an average of 2,827 new cases every day.
- New deaths decreased by 19% compared to the previous week, with an average of 38 new deaths every day.
- Since early January 2021, the number of hospitalizations have continued to decrease, 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 910,460 to 942,800 cumulative reported cases and 22,335 to 22,945 deaths are expected by March 21, 2021.

Key vaccine updates as of March 6, 2021:

- 5.11% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, including:
  - 29.66% of adults aged 80 or older;
  - 62.12% of health care workers targeted for priority vaccination, and;
  - 85.45% of adults living in group living settings for seniors.
- 1.51% of population have received both required doses of the vaccine.

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

<b>Global</b> (As of March 17, 2021 at 12:39 CET)	
<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	<b>Confirmed Deaths</b>
120,164,106	2,660,422

In the last day:

- There were 343,314 new cases and 7,038 deaths.
- The U.S., Brazil, India, Russia, and the U.K. reported the most new cases and Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Poland, and Italy reported the most deaths.

In the past week:

- Over 3 million new cases and 61,412 deaths were reported.
- Brazil, the U.S., India, France, and Italy reported the most new cases and Brazil, the U.S., Mexico, Russia, and Italy reported the most new deaths.

Highlights from Weekly Epidemiological Summary as of March 16, 2021:

- The number of new COVID-19 cases continued to increase for the third consecutive week, with a 10% increase in cases compared to the previous week. Increased cases were reported in all regions except Africa.
- The number of reported new deaths continues to decline, with a 3% 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 10, 2021 Partner Update)*

**Provincial Updates**

The Ontario Government:

- Is making it easier to administer rapid COVID-19 testing in the workplace ([news release](#))
- Is taking further steps to support integrated patient care ([news release](#))
- Supports tourism, culture, sport, and recreation organizations ([news release](#))
- Provides additional protection for retirement home residents and staff ([news release](#))



- Is launching provincial booking system for COVID-19 vaccines ([news release](#))
- Moves three regions to new levels in the COVID-19 response framework ([news release](#))
- Continues to support businesses, workers, and families during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Activates emergency brake in Sudbury Public Health region ([news release](#))
- Marks one year anniversary of COVID-19 pandemic ([news release](#))

#### Public Health Ontario published:

- Updated: COVID-19 Period of Communicability – What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 B.1.1.7 Variant of Concern – What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Outbreaks and Cases in Ontario, by Setting ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: Elementary and Secondary School Outbreaks and Cases ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: Trends of COVID-19 Incidence in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification ([report](#))

#### Other Provincial News:

- Science advisers say Ontario is experiencing a third wave as variant cases rise ([article](#))
- Ontario vaccine booking system errors now resolved ([article](#))
- Ontario getting ready to expand AstraZeneca shots to adults 65 and older ([article](#))
- Every day of the COVID-19 pandemic in all Ontario health units, in one image ([article](#))
- Indigenous clinics lead off-reserve vaccine efforts as Ontario develops plan ([article](#))
- Second COVID wave has hit working women harder than the first, survey finds ([article](#))
- Ontario books 90,000 COVID-19 vaccinations on first day of online registration ([article](#))
- Vaccines give Ontario's oldest people a shot of hope in a lonely pandemic year ([article](#))
- Capacity limits increase for weddings, funerals as more regions go into lockdown ([article](#))
- Ontarians asked to stop region hopping to receive COVID-19 vaccine quicker ([article](#))
- Amazon Canada's Brampton warehouse shuttered over COVID-19 outbreaks ([article](#))
- Variants of concern cause more than 40% of new COVID-19 cases in Ontario ([article](#))
- With most LTC residents vaccinated, restoring their quality of life is urgent ([article](#))
- More than 1,000 call for restaurant workers to be in Phase 2 of vaccine rollout ([article](#))

#### ***National Updates***

##### The Government of Canada:

- Welcomes interim report from the COVID Alert Advisory Council ([news release](#))
- Announces new measures to protect foreign workers from COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Invests in new COVID-19 research projects across the country ([news release](#))
- COVID-19 Update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Marks one year since the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic ([statement](#))
- Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer: [March 11](#), [March 12](#), [March 13](#), [March 14](#), [March 15](#), [March 16](#), [March 17](#)

##### Other National News:

- No evidence to suggest AstraZeneca vaccine causing adverse effects: Tam ([article](#))
- AstraZeneca vaccine now recommended for use on seniors in Canada ([article](#))
- Medicago COVID-19 vaccine becomes first in Canada to reach large scale trials ([article](#))
- Moderna begins vaccine trial in kids under age of 12, including in Canada ([article](#))
- Trudeau expresses caution over use of COVID-19 'vaccine passports' ([article](#))
- Coming week will see trickle of COVID-19 vaccine doses before floodgates open ([article](#))
- From restaurant staff to pilots, pandemic is pushing people to retrain for new jobs ([article](#))
- Shortage of services to help growing number of long-haul COVID-19 sufferers ([article](#))
- 'We failed the most vulnerable': Tam's biggest takeaway after a year of COVID ([article](#))

- Canada honours those who died of COVID-19 a year after pandemic declared ([article](#))
- 5 graphs that help tell the story of the pandemic ([article](#))
- COVID-19 decimated the arts in Canada, and the worst may be yet to come ([article](#))

### ***Global Updates***

#### The World Health Organization (WHO):

- New research highlights risks of separating newborns from mothers during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Director General continues to emphasize the need for vaccine equity: “the greatest threat that most countries face now is lack of access to vaccines... We continue to call for all countries to work in solidarity to ensure that vaccination begins in all countries within the first 100 days of this year. We have 26 days left.” ([Remarks at March 15 media briefing](#))
- COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund marks anniversary, appeals for continued support ([news release](#))
- Adds Janssen vaccine to list of safe and effective tools against COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- ACT-Accelerator releases prioritised strategy and budget for 2021 to change the course of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic ([news release](#))

#### WHO published:

- WHO statement on AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine safety signals ([statement](#))
- Special Focus: Building and maintaining trust – what countries should do to prepare communities for a COVID-19 vaccine, treatment, or a new test ([Weekly Epi Update p.4-5](#))
- Special Focus: Update on SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern ([Weekly Epi Update p.6-9](#))
- Ensuring essential health services during COVID-19 in Chhattisgarh, India ([feature story](#))

#### Other International News:

- AstraZeneca not linked to blood clots in preliminary European findings ([article](#))
- China approves another COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use ([article](#))
- France investigating new COVID-19 variant that seems to evade testing ([article](#))
- Vaccine and case counts will determine when Canada-U.S. border opens ([article](#))
- EU proposes coronavirus passes to allow free travel by summer ([article](#))
- Novavax vaccine 96% effective against original coronavirus version in U.K. trial ([article](#))

## SMDHU Resources

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

#### **[SMDHU Home Page](#)**

- Posted link to new [COVID-19 Impact Survey](#) page with details on follow-up survey on how the pandemic has impacted Simcoe Muskoka residents and a link to complete it

#### **[Main COVID](#)**

- Updated main content with details on how adults turning 80 years and older can access the province’s [online booking system](#) and call centre
- Updated main content with information on pre-registration for eligible Phase 1 groups

#### **[Vaccine and Immunization](#)**

- Updated main content with details on how adults turning 80 years and older can access the province’s [online booking system](#) and call centre
- Updated main content with information on pre-registration for remaining eligible groups
- Added pre-registration information, eligibility screening questions, and link to pre-registration system for each eligible group under the following expander bars:

- [Indigenous adults and their household members](#)
- [Adult recipients of chronic home care](#)
- [Health care workers](#)
- [Essential caregivers of residents in LTC and retirement homes](#)
- Updated main content with information on the AstraZeneca primary care pilot program

## **Reopening Schools**

### **Families**

- Posted revised [Return to school attestation form](#)

### **School Administrators and Educators**

- Posted the following revised documents in main content: [When COVID-19 symptoms develop at school or child care](#) and [Return to school attestation form](#)

## **Operating your Business Safely**

- Posted revised public health guidance documents under the following expander bars:
  - [Resources for all employers and workplaces](#)
  - [Employers of temporary foreign workers](#)
  - [Food operators](#)
  - [Malls and shopping centres](#)

## **Partners and Municipalities**

- Posted [Letter to the people who live, work, and obtain their health care in the District of Muskoka](#) issued March 16, 2021
- Posted revised public health guidance documents under the following expander bars:
  - [Farmers' Markets](#)
  - [Public Washrooms](#)
  - [Shelter Services](#)
  - [Warming Centres](#)

## **Enforcement**

- Added new charge to table "Summary of SMDHU Enforcement Actions"

## **New HealthFAXes:**

- **March 11, 2021:** [COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #9: 2<sup>nd</sup> Dose Interval, Increasing Vaccine Supply and Community Clinic Booking Update](#)

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