

COVID-19 Update for Partners

February 24, 2021

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Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

Vaccination rollout update

- The [Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#) is now posted on our [website](#).
- Our community COVID-19 vaccine clinics will open in 6 sub-regions starting March 1, including clinics in: Barrie and area (3 locations), District of Muskoka (2); North Simcoe (2), South Simcoe (3), Orillia/Couchiching (1), and South Georgian Bay (2).
- The operation of these clinics will be dependent on vaccine supply. Not all clinics will be open every day.
- All clinics will be open to **priority groups by appointment only** at this time. As of March 1, the following groups will be eligible to book an appointment at these clinics:
 - Individuals 85 years of age and older;
 - All Indigenous adults 55 years of age and older;
 - Adult recipients of chronic home care;
 - Very high priority health care workers, in accordance with the Ministry of Health's [Guidance for Prioritizing Health Care Workers for COVID-19 Vaccination](#), and;
 - Anyone who was missed from the highest priority groups during Phase 1.
- Eligible individuals can book appointments online via our [website](#) or by phoning the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU).
- A press release with additional details will be shared later this week.

Changes to screening for children in schools and child care

- The provincial daily screening tool for school and child care has been updated. New rules include that if a child, student, or staff member has just one new or worsening symptom of COVID-19, they must stay home until:
 - They get a negative COVID-19 test result;
 - They get an alternative diagnosis from a health care provider, or;
 - It has been 10 days since the start of their symptoms.
- Additionally, when a household member has COVID-19 symptoms, everyone in the household must stay home until the person with symptoms gets a negative COVID-19 test result or an alternate diagnosis from a health care provider. If the person with symptoms does not get tested, everyone in the household must stay home for:

- 14 days from the last contact with the person with symptoms if this person can self-isolate from the rest of the household; or
- 24 days from start of the ill person's symptom(s) if this person cannot self-isolate from the rest of the household.

Local example of how quickly COVID-19 spreads

- A new [infographic](#) has been posted on our website to illustrate a local example of how quickly COVID-19 can spread. In less than 3 weeks, a community of 20,000 had:
 - Outbreaks in 2 schools and 1 workplace;
 - 30 new COVID cases;
 - 1 case requiring hospitalization;
 - 25 people identified as high-risk contacts requiring isolation, and;
 - 14 households with at least one confirmed COVID-19 case.
- This demonstrates why it is so important to be vigilant in our measures against COVID-19, particularly now as we see the rising spread of the U.K. variant locally.
- While there is no longer an order to stay home, I urge people to behave as though there is. Stay home except for essential purposes, stay at least 2 metres away from those outside your household, wear a mask in all indoor public spaces and workplaces and outdoors if physical distancing is not possible. Screen daily for symptoms and get tested if you have symptoms.

New on HealthSTATS – Provincial COVID-19 Response Framework - Status of Simcoe Muskoka

- SMDHU returned to the provincial framework on February 16. This page explains the categorization of SMDHU by providing local data for all framework indicators.
- SMDHU is currently in the **Red/Control zone**. However, the presence of variants of concern has not been considered in the Ministry's assessment of SMDHU's current zone categorization. Based on recent local trends, I am seriously considering advocating to the province that the SMDHU go back into a lockdown.

Board of Health (BOH) endorses mandatory paid sick days for all Ontario workers

- On February 17, the SMDHU BOH voted to send a letter to Premier Doug Ford in support of amending the *Employment Standards Act* to include 7 permanent paid sick days annually and an additional 14 paid sick days in the context of a public health emergency.
- Paid sick days would enable workers to follow critical public health advice to stay at home when they are sick, in order to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- Beyond the pandemic, paid sick days would help address inequities along lines of race, gender, ability, and income that are often faced by low-wage earners.

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

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of February 24, 2021 14:00)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
6,334	526	5,576	187
<u>In the last day:</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 43 people tested positive, 72 people recovered, and there were no new deaths. 			
<u>Currently:</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There have been 111 new cases reported to the Health Unit for the current week. ● 21 people are hospitalized for COVID-19. ● There are 17 ongoing outbreaks (workplace settings: 9, institutional settings: 6, educational settings: 1, community settings: 1). 			

- The percent positivity rate in Simcoe County is 2.0% and 0.8% in the District of Muskoka compared to the provincial percent positivity rate of 2.2%.
- There is a total of 174 confirmed cases of the UK B.1.1.7 variant and an additional 270 cases have screened positive (awaiting confirmatory testing).
- Young adults aged 18-34 years have the highest rate of infection so far in February.

Since the last Partner Update:

- We have reported 306 new cases, 420 recoveries, and 7 new deaths.
- There have been 14 new confirmed cases of the U.K. variant and 116 new positive screens for the variant.
- There are 124 fewer active cases.
- There was a 30% increase in cases reported from February 14-20 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](#)

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Vaccine* Data *(As of February 24, 2021 14:00)*

Total doses administered	Doses administered previous day
36,120	981

Highlights:

- 7,635 immunizations have been provided since the last Partner Update.
- 2,944 (92%) LTC residents and 3,159 (87%) retirement home residents have received their first dose.
- More than 15,000 people have received both required doses of the vaccine, including:
 - Nearly 5,300 hospital workers and residents in alternate level of care;
 - Over 4,700 LTC and retirement home staff and essential caregivers;
 - Over 3,000 LTC residents, and;
 - Over 2,000 retirement home residents.

* Vaccine administration data is for North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN area only (which does not include Bradford, Adjala Tosoronto, and New Tecumseth). Vaccinations in South Simcoe area are being administered by Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Local Media Updates *(Since February 17, 2021 Partner Update)*

- 30% increase in cases has Gardner considering lockdown request ([article](#))
- Voluntary asymptomatic COVID testing begins at Simcoe schools next week ([article](#))
- 'More rigorous' COVID screening important to keep schools safe, says Gardner ([article](#))
- OSMH official says presence of variant is 'very concerning' ([article](#))
- Health Unit still assisting Roberta Place to prevent further outbreaks ([article](#))
- Deadly COVID-19 outbreak at Waypoint appears to be subsiding ([article](#))
- Area courthouses closed after COVID-19 variant case confirmed ([article](#))
- COVID-19 variant case confirmed on GO's Barrie line ([article](#))
- Last of four outbreaks declared over at Barrie's RVH ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka has more U.K. variant cases than any other Ontario health unit ([article](#))
- U.K. variant likely found in half of region's active outbreaks ([article](#))
- Collingwood Council waives late penalties on taxes until May ([news release](#))
- Did Simcoe Muskoka see red zone too soon? Barrie Mayor's answer is 'yes' ([article](#))
- Barrie company gets Health Canada approval for rapid COVID-19 antibody test ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

Ontario *(As of February 24, 2021, 10:30)*

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
296,173	10,050	279,230	6,893

As of today:

- There were 1,054 new cases, 1,291 resolved cases, and 9 deaths in the last day.
- There are a total of 395 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 9 cases of the South African variant, and 1 case of the Brazilian variant.
- A total of 675 people are hospitalized for COVID-19, 287 people are in intensive care units (ICU) and 182 people are on ventilators.
- There are 210 ongoing outbreaks in health care settings (114 in LTC, 63 in retirement homes, and 33 in hospitals).
- The current effective reproduction number is 0.88.

In the last week:

- There have been 7,590 new cases, 8,361 recoveries, and 164 deaths.
- There are 935 fewer active cases compared to the same day last week.
- The average number of weekly cases is 1,084.

Vaccine status:

- A total of 602,848 vaccines doses have been administered to date, with 17,141 doses administered yesterday.
- 251,590 people in Ontario have been fully vaccinated.

Regional updates:

- Areas with the highest number of active cases per 100,000 population:
 - Peel (154.30), Toronto (130.25), York (76.67), and Brant (76.33).
- Areas with the highest number of active cases:
 - Toronto (3,558), Peel (2,132), York (851), Ottawa (452), and Hamilton (366).

Weekly Epidemiological Summary highlights: February 6-13, 2021:

- Confirmed cases of COVID-19 have continued to decline since early January 2021.
- The number of outbreaks in healthcare settings has been decreasing in recent weeks.
- As of February 13, a variant of concern has been identified by more than 40% of Public Health Units in Ontario.
- A new variant of concern has emerged, with the first confirmed case of the South African variant identified in the week of February 6-13.

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 February 23, 2021 at 19:00 EDT)*

Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
852,269	30,677	799,830	21,762

Yesterday:

- Canada reported 2,760 new cases and 40 deaths.
- New cases were reported in BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, NS, and NL.
- Deaths were reported in BC, AB, SK, ON, and QC.

Since the last Partner Update:

- In the last week, 20,692 people tested positive for COVID-19, 365 people died, and 25,319 people recovered.
- There are 4,992 fewer active cases of COVID-19 than there was a week ago.

Between February 9 and February 16, 2021:

- The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized decreased from 2,305 to 1,974.
- The number of COVID-19 patients in ICU beds decreased from 661 to 609.
- The number of COVID-19 patients mechanically vented decreased from 373 to 347.

Weekly epidemiology update: February 6-February 13, 2021:

- New cases decreased by 14% compared to the previous week, with an average of 3,189 new cases every day.
- New deaths decreased by 30% compared to the previous week, with an average of 76 new deaths every day.
- Since early January 2021, daily case rates and the number of hospitalizations have decreased, while ICU admissions have remained stable.
- Daily case rates remain highest among those 20-29 and 30-39 years of age.
- According to forecasting, between 841,650 to 878,850 cumulative reported cases and 21,510 to 22,420 deaths are expected by February 28, 2021.

Key vaccine updates: As of February 13, 2021

- 2.56% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, including:
 - 12.53% of adults aged 80 or older*;
 - 50.94% of health care workers targeted for priority vaccination*, and;
 - 49.21% of adults living in group living settings for seniors*.
- 0.81% of population have received both required doses of the vaccine.

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

* Data from Ontario are not included in this value as information on age and key populations was not reported.

Global (As of February 24, 2021 at 10:20 CET)	
Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
111,593,583	2,475,020

In the last day:

- There were 277,304 new cases and 7,414 deaths.
- The U.S., Brazil, India, Russia, and Czechia reported the most new cases and the U.S., Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and Germany reported the most deaths.

In the past week:

- Over 2.5 million new cases and 66,009 deaths were reported.
- The U.S., Brazil, France, India, and Russia reported the most new cases and the U.S., Brazil, Mexico, the U.K., and Russia reported the most new deaths.

Highlights from Weekly Epidemiological Summary as of February 21, 2021:

- The number of new COVID-19 cases continues to fall for the sixth consecutive week. Globally, new cases declined by 11% compared to the previous week.
- The Americas continue to see the greatest drop in the number of COVID-19 cases.
- The number of reported new deaths has been declining over the past 3 weeks. Globally, new deaths declined by 20% 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 Feb. 17, 2021 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Administers over half a million doses of COVID-19 vaccines ([news release](#))
- Extends stay-at-home order in Toronto, Peel, and North Bay-Parry Sound ([news release](#))
- Launches education campaign to help workplaces reopen safely ([news release](#))
- Invests in contact tracing technology to protect workers from COVID-19 ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario published:

- Updated: Trends of COVID-19 incidence in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 P.1 Variant of Concern (VOC) – What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 B.1.351 VOC – What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Updated: Evidence on Public Health Measures to Control VOC ([evidence brief](#))
- Updated: Factors Affecting Virus Communicability – What We Know So Far ([synthesis](#))
- Adverse Events Following Immunization for COVID-19 in Ontario ([weekly summary](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification ([report](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Ontario reveals more details on vaccination plan, most won't get it for months ([article](#))
- Toronto working on better housing as more test positive for variants in shelters ([article](#))
- More provincial funding needed to hire teachers and reduce class sizes ([article](#))
- Ontario government rejects need for 'duplicate' sick pay program ([article](#))
- Ontario has introduced stricter COVID-19 screening for schools ([article](#))
- Clandestine haircuts and manicures: underground economy a pandemic problem ([article](#))
- Chiefs call out Ford for using pandemic restrictions to push through legislation ([article](#))
- Ontario's COVID-19 vaccine rollout could look different across each health unit ([article](#))
- School boards scrambling to bring in asymptomatic COVID-19 testing ([article](#))
- Ontario's school testing program finds 32 COVID cases in 3,706 tests ([article](#))
- Canada Post facility hit by major outbreak excluded from provincial inspections ([article](#))
- Ontario loses 355,000 jobs in 2020, single largest decline on record ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- COVID-19 update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- To begin COVID-19 testing at land borders on February 22 ([news release](#))
- The impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities ([statement](#))
- Is here to help Canadians through a tax season like no other ([news release](#))
- And Prince Edward Island invest in pandemic-response warehouse ([new release](#))
- Proposes changes to recovery and EI benefits to support Canadians ([news release](#))
- Fines two individuals for presenting falsified COVID-19 test results ([news release](#))
- Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada: [February 18](#), [February 20](#), [February 22](#), [February 23](#), [February 24](#)

Other National News:

- COVID-19 vaccinations could allow toughest restrictions to life before September ([article](#))
- 'Too early' to say when Johnson & Johnson shots will arrive, minister says ([article](#))
- Mass vaccinations not only factor in Canada's reopening timeline ([article](#))
- Low-wage earners hit hardest by pandemic job market ([article](#))

- Do we know how effective vaccines are against the variants? ([article](#))
- COVID-19 hit federal prisons twice as hard in second wave of pandemic ([article](#))
- Vaccine developers say lack of federal funding hurt domestic capabilities ([article](#))
- MPs pass motion requiring federal government to let them see vaccine contracts ([article](#))
- Many Indigenous communities seeing success during vaccine rollout ([article](#))
- AstraZeneca vaccine review is in the ‘final stages,’ Health Canada says ([article](#))
- New hotel quarantine rules for air travellers are now in effect ([article](#))
- Canada will receive its largest COVID-19 vaccine shipment to date this week ([article](#))
- Top public health doctor says vaccine results so far are very encouraging ([article](#))
- Variants spread, models show current restrictions not enough to stop third wave ([article](#))
- Health experts suggest one dose of Pfizer’s vaccine is as good as two ([article](#))

Global Updates

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- COVID-19 vaccines shipped to Ghana, marking beginning of global rollout ([news release](#))
- Director General continues to emphasize the need for vaccine equity: “This is not a matter of charity. It’s a matter of epidemiology. Unless we end the pandemic everywhere, we will not end it anywhere.” ([Remarks at February 22 media briefing](#))
- No-fault compensation programme for COVID-19 vaccines is a world first ([news release](#))
- G7 leaders commit \$4.3 billion to finance global equitable access to tests, treatments, and vaccines in 2021 ([news release](#))
- World waking up to vaccine equity ([news release](#))
- Is “proud to launch the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for 2021. The new plan builds on last year’s SPRP, with six objectives: Suppress transmission; reduce exposure; counter misinformation and disinformation; protect the vulnerable; reduce death and illness; and accelerate equitable access to new tools, including vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics” ([Remarks at February 18 Member States briefing](#))

WHO published:

- Special Focus: WHO COVID-19 vaccine policy recommendations ([Weekly Epidemiological Update p.4-6](#))
- Special Focus: Update on SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern ([Weekly Epidemiological Update p.7-13](#))
- Priority medical devices for the COVID-19 response ([interim guideline](#))
- Country readiness for COVID-19 vaccines ([feature story](#))
- Episode 26 of Science in 5: [Vaccine Dosage](#)

Other International News:

- Local scientist for Oxford-AstraZeneca says one-dose strategy working in U.K. ([article](#))
- Johnson & Johnson’s one-dose COVID-19 vaccine closes in on U.S. approval ([article](#))
- Teachers may be bigger drivers of transmission than students, CDC study finds ([article](#))
- ‘These numbers are stunning’: COVID-19 death toll in U.S. surpasses 500,000 ([article](#))
- Canada-U.S. border closed to non-essential travel until at least March 21 ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

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

[Vaccine and Immunization](#)

- Updated content in the following expander bars:
 - [Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#)

- [What you need to know before your vaccination appointment](#)

Reopening Schools

Families

- Updated main content to reflect changes to daily screening for children in schools and child cares.
- Removed SMDHU screening tool and replaced it with the provincial [Daily Student Screening Tool](#)
- Revised the following documents: [My child did not pass the COVID-19 daily screening. Now what?](#) and [Return to school attestation form](#)
- Updated content in the following expander bars:
 - [My child has symptoms of COVID-19, what should I do?](#)
 - [When can my child return to school after having symptoms of COVID-19?](#)
 - [What if my child is a close contact?](#)

School Administrators and Educators

- Removed SMDHU screening tool and replaced it with the provincial [daily COVID-19 screening tool](#)
- Revised the following documents:
 - [COVID-19 supplemental guidance document for school/child care settings](#)
 - [My child did not pass the COVID-19 daily screening. Now what?](#)
 - [When COVID-19 symptoms develop at school or child care](#)
 - [Protocol when student/staff tests positive for COVID-19](#)
 - [Return to school attestation form](#)
 - [COVID-19 return to school or child care: Protocol for employees/visitors](#)
- Updated content in the following expander bars:
 - [Staff or student develops symptoms of COVID-19 at school](#)
 - [Staff or student is a close contact with someone with COVID-19](#)
 - [Staff or student notifies school that they have COVID-19](#)
 - [Health Unit confirms that someone at the school has COVID-19](#)
 - [A school outbreak is declared](#)
 - [Return to school](#)

New HealthFAXes:

- **February 23, 2021:** [COVID-19: Update #30 Provincial Changes in Contact Management; Revised Provincial VOC Interim Guidance; Revised Provincial Screening for Schools & Child Care Centres; Revised SMDHU Medical Officer of Health Order Re: Self-Isolation](#)
- **February 24, 2021:** [COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #7: Upcoming Vaccination Sequencing for Phase One Priority Populations: Adults 85 and over, next priority Health Care Workers, Indigenous Adults and Chronic Home Care Recipients](#)

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](#)