

COVID-19 Update for Partners

March 3, 2021

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Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

Simcoe Muskoka moves into Grey - Lockdown

- Our region moved into Grey - Lockdown as of March 1. Since then, I have heard from local businesses, politicians, and community members about their very real concern about the impact this has on livelihoods, businesses, and physical and mental wellbeing. I understand and sympathize that the pandemic has been devastating for many.
- The Grey - Lockdown is intended as a short-term emergency brake to prevent the possibility of a third wave.
- Our concern is that we are seeing increases in cases and outbreaks of the B.1.1.7 variant in Simcoe and Muskoka. The variants of concern (VOC) are far more contagious than the original COVID-19 strain and can result in more severe disease.
- Simcoe Muskoka has more confirmed cases of the U.K. variant and positive screens for a VOC than any other health unit. Currently, about 66% of our COVID-19 cases are either a confirmed case of the U.K. variant or a positive screen for a VOC awaiting confirmation.
- We are acting early and cautiously to minimize the impact of the VOC which has led to third waves elsewhere in the world.
- I know this brings little comfort to our business community. This is one of the heartbreaks of the pandemic. I will continue to listen to our business community, closely monitor our VOC case numbers and trends, and, as soon as it is safe to do so, I will ask the province to lift restrictions.

Vaccination clinic update

- Yesterday, we opened the first of our community vaccination clinics in Simcoe Muskoka. This is a momentous step to getting the pandemic under control which has only been made possible through the tremendous efforts of all our partners working to organize them. I'd also like to thank my staff who have worked tirelessly toward this.
- **Update:** Our vaccination appointments and waitlist for dates up to March 16, 2021 are now FULL. Those who are currently on the waitlist will be contacted by the Health Unit with an appointment date from March 10-16.
- The province of Ontario is opening a new booking system and call centre for vaccine appointments, which is expected to launch on March 15. We will provide more details about how to book via this new system as information becomes available.

- We recognize there are issues with getting through on the phones due to an increased volume of calls. We are working to address this and provide the best possible customer service we can and ask that you have patience as we work through these issues.
- We are still restricted by the amount of vaccine we receive weekly and, as a result, we do not have clinics in every community every day.
- A reminder - clinics are open **by appointment only to priority groups**: Seniors 85+, Indigenous adults 55+ and their adult household members; adult recipients of chronic home care; and Very High Priority health care workers.
- It is important that eligible individuals who are booking appointments read about the required documents and procedures on our [website](#) so that their appointment can be honoured at the clinics. Those who don't meet the criteria will be turned away and no walk-ins can be accommodated.

Variants of concern (VOC) information on our [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#)

- Shortly, we will be posting more detailed information about the VOC on our HealthSTATS page including:
 - Information on all outbreaks associated with a VOC or mutation of interest (MOI);
 - Information on outbreak and non-outbreak cases of VOC and MOI by geographical region, and;
 - A chart showing the trend of the 7-day rolling average of new COVID-19 cases associated with a VOC or MOI.

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

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of March 3, 2021 14:00)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
6,554	431	5,880	189
<p><u>In the last day:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 people tested positive, 65 people recovered, and there were no new deaths. • There were 14 new confirmed cases of the U.K. variant and 40 new positive screens for a variant of concern (VOC). <p><u>Currently:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 72 new cases reported to the Health Unit for the current week. • 18 people are hospitalized for COVID-19. • There are 28 ongoing outbreaks (workplaces: 13, institutional settings: 10, educational settings: 4, community settings: 1). • There has been a total of 205 confirmed cases of the UK B.1.1.7 variant and a total of 378 additional cases have screened positive for a VOC. <p><u>Since the last Partner Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have reported 220 new cases, 304 recoveries, and 2 new deaths. • There have been 31 new confirmed cases of the U.K. variant and 108 new positive screens for a VOC. • There are 95 fewer active cases. • There are 9 more active outbreaks compared to the same day last week. • There was a 10% decrease in new cases reported during the week of February 21 compared to the previous week. <p>For more local data, see: SMDHU COVID-19 HealthSTATS page, COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard, Provincial COVID-19 Response Framework – Status of Simcoe Muskoka</p>			

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Vaccine* Data (As of March 3, 2021 14:00)

Total doses administered	Doses administered previous day
44,078	1,382
<p>Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,958 immunizations have been provided since the last Partner Update. • 3,180 (99%) long-term care (LTC) residents, 3,458 (95%) retirement home residents, and over 1,000 seniors living in the community have received their first dose. • More than 15,500 people have received both required doses of the vaccine, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Over 5,300 hospital workers and residents in alternate level of care; ○ Nearly 4,800 LTC and retirement home staff and essential caregivers; ○ Nearly 3,000 LTC residents, and; ○ Over 2,300 retirement home residents. <p><small>* 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.</small></p>	

Local Media Updates (Since February 24, 2021 Partner Update)

- Gardner watching for variant spread, fielding hundreds of angry e-mails ([article](#))
- COVID-19 outbreaks declared at two area schools ([article](#))
- Orillia senior says getting vaccine was an 'amazing experience' ([article](#))
- County of Simcoe looking to find appropriate balance in pandemic framework ([statement](#))
- Collingwood hospital continues to meet challenges during the pandemic ([article](#))
- Top doc urges staff to take careful approach with non-compliant businesses ([article](#))
- Three local arts organizations to receive a share of \$24M provincial relief fund ([article](#))
- Wasaga calls on province to release COVID emergency brake on Simcoe County ([article](#))
- Mayor Lehman stands up for small businesses as new lockdown takes hold ([article](#))
- Realtor, taxi company offering local seniors free rides to vaccinations ([article](#))
- Barrie chamber says lockdown will be 'devastating' for local businesses ([news release](#))
- Barrie-area MPPs 'disappointed' by region going into Grey – Lockdown ([article](#))
- Collingwood council telling province to put town back into the red 'immediately' ([article](#))
- 14 inmates at Penetanguishene super-jail test positive for COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Mayor Keffer urges Ford to reconsider lockdown measures for Simcoe Muskoka ([article](#))
- Downtown BIA calls for 'urgent action' against lockdown restrictions ([article](#))
- Vaccine arrives by helicopter on Christian Island ([article](#))
- Muskoka mayors frustrated with return to grey zone in COVID-19 framework ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

Ontario (As of March 3, 2021, 10:30)			
Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
303,763	10,397	286,352	7,014
<p>As of today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 958 new cases, 1,090 resolved cases, and 17 deaths in the last day. • There are a total of 552 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 27 cases of the South African variant, and 3 cases of the Brazilian variant. • A total of 668 people are hospitalized for COVID-19, 274 people are in intensive care units (ICU) and 188 people are on ventilators. • There are 535 ongoing outbreaks (health care settings: 170, workplaces: 127, congregate living: 93, schools and child cares: 83, other settings: 62). • The current effective reproduction number is 0.99. 			

In the last week:

- There have been 7,590 new cases, 7,122 recoveries, and 121 deaths.
- There has been an increase of 157 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 18 cases of the South African variant, and 2 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- There are 347 more active cases compared to the same day last week.
- The average number of weekly cases is 1,084.

Vaccine status:

- A total of 754,419 vaccines doses have been administered to date, with 27,398 doses administered yesterday.
- 266,710 people in Ontario have been fully vaccinated.

Regional updates:

- Areas with the highest number of active cases per 100,000 population:
 - Thunder Bay District (241.63), Peel (162.62), Brant County (149.69), and Toronto (121.91).
- Areas with the highest number of active cases:
 - Toronto (3,330), Peel (2,247), York (737), Ottawa (528), and Waterloo (406).

Weekly Epidemiological Summary highlights: February 14-20, 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.
- The total number of outbreaks in educational settings increased by 94.1% compared to the previous week.
- A variant of concern has been identified by over 40% 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 1, 2021 at 19:00 EDT)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
872,747	30,252	820,450	22,045

Yesterday:

- Canada reported 2,457 new cases and 28 deaths.
- New cases were reported in all provinces and territories except NWT and YT.
- Deaths were reported in BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, and NB.

Since the last Partner Update:

- In the last week, 20,478 people tested positive for COVID-19, 282 people died, and 20,620 people recovered.
- There are 4,992 fewer active cases of COVID-19 than there was a week ago.

Between February 16 and February 23, 2021:

- The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized decreased from 1,956 to 1,729.
- The number of COVID-19 patients in ICU beds decreased from 601 to 575.
- The number of COVID-19 patients mechanically vented decreased from 340 to 303.

Weekly epidemiology update: February 14-February 20, 2021:

- New cases decreased by 10% compared to the previous week, with an average of 2,857 new cases every day.

- New deaths decreased by 26% compared to the previous week, with an average of 56 new deaths every day.
- Since early January 2021, daily case rates and the number of hospitalizations have decreased, while ICU admissions have remained relatively stable.
- Daily case rates remain highest among those 20-29 and 30-39 years of age.
- According to forecasting, between 861,120 to 900,630 cumulative reported cases and 21,770 to 22,760 deaths are expected by March 7, 2021.

Key vaccine updates: As of February 20, 2021

- 2.86% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, including:
 - 14.10% of adults aged 80 or older;
 - 47.81% of health care workers targeted for priority vaccination, and;
 - 67.49% of adults living in group living settings for seniors.
- 1.14% 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 3, 2021 at 10:18 CET)	
Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
114,315,846	2,539,427

In the last day:

- There were 286,062 new cases and 6,881 deaths.
- The U.S., Brazil, India, Italy, and Czechia reported the most new cases and the U.S., Brazil, Russia, Mexico, and France reported the most deaths.

In the past week:

- Over 2.7 million new cases and 64,407 deaths were reported.
- The U.S., Brazil, France, Italy, and India reported the most new cases and the U.S., Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and the U.K. reported the most new deaths.

Highlights from Weekly Epidemiological Summary as of February 28, 2021:

- The number of new COVID-19 cases increased for the first time in 7 weeks, with a 7% global increase in cases compared to the previous week. This could be related to the continued spread of VOCs, relaxation of public health measures, and fatigue adhering to public health measures.
- 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 Feb. 24, 2021 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Hires 100 additional health and safety inspectors ([news release](#))
- Provides more than \$1 billion in support for small business ([news release](#))
- Provides significant financial support to the arts sector ([news release](#))
- Is keeping seniors safe and socially connected during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Supports the modernization of municipal services ([news release](#))
- Increases support for transit across the province ([news release](#))

- Activates emergency brake in Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario published:

- Updated: Trends of COVID-19 Incidence in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification ([report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Variants of Concern in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Ontario long-term care homes continue breaking COVID-19 safety rules ([article](#))
- Ontario won't use Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine on seniors ([article](#))
- Risk of third wave grows as infections rise and variants spread ([article](#))
- Ontario may speed up COVID vaccinations by further postponing booster shots ([article](#))
- LTC minister explains delayed provincial action after flagging COVID-19 threats ([article](#))
- Ford overrode Ontario top doctor on COVID-19 tests, overwhelming system ([article](#))
- Ontario should prioritize COVID-19 vaccine rollout by neighbourhood ([article](#))
- Ontario gives Toronto OK to prioritize COVID-19 vaccination of homeless people ([article](#))
- Top doctor grilled about why he didn't publicize concern's with Ford's lockdown ([article](#))
- Ontario lacked updated pandemic plans before COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Ontario alerts health care workers about counterfeit N95 respirators ([article](#))
- Travellers from Toronto Pearson International Airport violating Quarantine Act ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- Allows more flexible storage and transportation conditions for Pfizer vaccine ([statement](#))
- Announces wage and rent subsidy amounts remain unchanged until June ([news release](#))
- Publishes data used to support authorizations of the Moderna vaccine ([news release](#))
- To receive 2 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine ([news release](#))
- Authorizes AstraZeneca and Verity Pharmaceuticals Inc./Serum Institute of India COVID-19 vaccines ([statement](#))
- Introduces legislation to increase number of weeks for regular EI and to prevent travellers from qualifying for recovery benefits during mandatory quarantine ([news release](#))
- Proposes changes to the *Criminal Code* to improve justice system ([news release](#))
- Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada: [February 25](#), [February 26](#), [February 27](#), [February 28](#), [March 1](#), [March 2](#)

Other National News:

- Trudeau 'optimistic that timeline for COVID-19 vaccine rollout can be accelerated ([article](#))
- Benefits and risks of delaying second doses of COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- COVID-19 hit long-term care homes harder in second wave ([article](#))
- COVID cases starting to climb again after a month of decline ([article](#))
- Liberals' COVID-19 benefit programs continue to outpace wage losses ([article](#))
- International arrivals have fallen since testing and quarantine rules took effect ([article](#))
- Chief science adviser issues warning about B.C.'s vaccine timing 'experiment' ([article](#))
- Essential workers should be prioritized for AstraZeneca vaccine, experts suggest ([article](#))
- Provincial labour ministers to push for the expansion of paid sick leave ([article](#))
- Experts caution against temptation to comparison shop COVID-19 vaccines ([article](#))
- Provinces split on next steps in COVID-19 fight ([article](#))
- Specialized clinics to treat COVID-19 'long-haulers' popping up in Canada ([article](#))
- COVID models have been accurate, but worst cases have not materialized ([article](#))
- Vaccine safety study to examine adverse reactions to COVID-19 shots ([article](#))

Global Updates

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Director General reports that “Vaccines will help to save lives, but if countries rely solely on vaccines, they’re making a mistake. Basic public health measures remain the foundation of the response.” ([Remarks at March 1 media briefing](#))
- The Americas should be a ‘global priority’ for COVID-19 vaccines ([news release](#))
- First COVID-19 COVAX vaccine doses administered in Africa ([news release](#))
- Director General continues to highlight the need for vaccine equity “All governments have an obligation to protect their own people. But the best way to do that is by suppressing the virus everywhere at the same time.” ([Remarks at February 26 media briefing](#))
- COVID-19 oxygen emergency in low- and middle-income countries ([news release](#))

WHO published:

- COVAX publishes first round of vaccine allocations ([statement](#))
- Special Focus: COVID-19 trade, travel and points of entry ([Weekly Epi Update p.4-6](#))
- Special Focus: The importance of fit, filtration and breathability of non-medical (fabric) masks in the context of COVID-19 ([Weekly Epi Update p.7-8](#))
- Special Focus: Update on SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern ([Weekly Epi Update p.9-11](#))
- WHO Living guideline: Drugs to prevent COVID-19 ([interim guidance](#))
- Inside the mammoth undertaking of global vaccine distribution ([feature story](#))
- Roadmap to improve indoor ventilation in the context of COVID-19 ([report](#))

Other International News:

- How a changing virus is reshaping scientists’ views on COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Biden rules out helping Canada with vaccines before all Americans inoculated ([article](#))
- Explosion strikes Dutch COVID-19 test centre, police call it an attack ([article](#))
- AstraZeneca’s vaccine and seniors: Where Canada and other countries stand ([article](#))
- ‘Premature’ and ‘unrealistic’ to think COVID-19 will end soon, WHO warns ([article](#))
- Debilitating ‘post-COVID syndrome’ may have severe health and social impacts ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

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

Main COVID

- Updated main paragraph to include information on Simcoe Muskoka being in the Grey – Lockdown zone and updated information on vaccination appointments.
- Updated content in expander bar “[COVID-19 variants within the region](#)”
- Posted revised [Class Order for Self-Isolation](#) effective as of March 2, 2021.

Stop the Spread

- Updated content in expander bar “[Close contact, gatherings, and events](#)”

Vaccine and Immunization

- Update main paragraph to reflect that vaccination appointments and waitlist are now full.

Operating your Business Safely

- Updated main paragraph with information on Simcoe Muskoka being in the Grey – Lockdown zone.
- Posted letter from Dr. Gardner “[To the people whose work and businesses are affected by Lockdown in Simcoe Muskoka](#)”

- Updated content in the following expander bars to reflect Grey – Lockdown guidance:
 - [Resources for all employers and workplaces](#);
 - [Mandatory face covering in indoor public spaces](#);
 - [Curling clubs](#);
 - [Day camps](#);
 - [Food operators](#);
 - [Ice hut operators](#);
 - [Indoor and outdoor events and gatherings](#);
 - [Malls and shopping centres](#);
 - [Outdoor recreational amenities](#);
 - [Personal services settings](#), and;
 - [Recreational water facilities](#).
- Added new expander bar “[Short-term rentals and shared rental accommodations](#)”

Partners and Municipalities

- Updated main paragraph with information on Simcoe Muskoka being in the Grey – Lockdown zone.
- Updated documents under expander bar “[Class Orders and Letters of Instruction](#)”:
 - New [Class Order for Service Providers of Vulnerable Settings](#) issued March 2
 - Posted revised [Class Order for Self-isolation](#) issued March 2
- Updated content in the following expander bars to reflect Grey – Lockdown guidance:
 - [Day camps](#);
 - [Farmers’ markets](#);
 - [Food banks and donation centres](#);
 - [Outdoor ice surfaces/rinks and outdoor skating trails](#);
 - [Outdoor recreational amenities](#), and;
 - [Places of worship](#).

New HealthFAXes – None

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](#)