

COVID-19 Update for Partners

March 24, 2021

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Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

Vaccine update

- Last Friday, we opened up pre-registration for individuals turning 75-79 years of age on our [website](#). As of March 22, individuals in this age group can now book an appointment directly via the [provincial booking system](#).
- On our [HealthSTATS page](#), detailed information is available about who has been vaccinated under the 'COVID-19 Immunizations' tab. This includes information on vaccinations completed for each eligible group, daily cumulative vaccinations, and more.
- Over the weekend, there were some glitches with the provincial booking system that resulted in appointment time errors and lineups at our clinics. Thanks to the hard work of our staff and the patience of the public, we were able to complete all immunizations. The province was made aware of this issue and it has now been resolved.
- A few reminders for those with a vaccination appointment:
 - Arrive no more than 10 minutes early so that we can avoid lineups.
 - Immunization is done by appointment time, not arrival time. Drop-ins are not accepted.
 - Bring your Ontario health card. Eligible groups not related to age must also bring proof of eligibility.

How to book a vaccination appointment

- There has been some confusion about booking appointments. At this time, the province is handling the booking of eligible age groups, as they are announced, through their [booking system](#). Currently, individuals turning 75 years and older are eligible.
- Individuals eligible for reasons other than age must pre-register via the SMDHU [website](#), including:
 - Essential caregivers to residents in long-term care (LTC) or retirement homes;
 - Highest, Very High, and High Priority healthcare workers in accordance with the [Ministry of Health's Guidance on Health Care Worker Prioritization](#);
 - Adult recipients of chronic home care;
 - Indigenous adults (16+) and their household members; and
 - **[NEW]** Faith leaders who have close contact with others due to the provision of end-of-life care or pastoral care in vulnerable settings.

- If you are eligible and your pre-registration doesn't go through, you may be trying to book in the wrong area. Follow the instructions on our [website](#) and review the information specific to your eligible group.

Benefits of delayed second doses of vaccine

- As of March 10, based on provincial direction, all second doses of COVID-19 vaccines are being given 16 weeks after the first dose. Some people have expressed concern about this, but this decision benefits each of us in ensuring more supply for the population. Extending the second-dose interval allows us to immunize more people with the first dose in a shorter time period. Getting more people immunized with the first dose will help control the virus and reduce transmission.

Section 22 Order to protect Temporary Foreign Workers

- I am issuing a revised order for temporary foreign workers (TFW) coming to our region. These workers have been vulnerable to infection, so it is important that we protect them.
- This revised order is designed to ensure employers understand their responsibilities to protect TFWs at all times and includes specific instructions related to:
 - The required set up of quarantine accommodations upon arrival;
 - Restricting the number of workers sharing living accommodations to 15 people who work together in a team;
 - Cohorting groups of workers separately to reduce risk of transmission;
 - Ensuring workers who travel in the same vehicle wear appropriate face coverings, ensure fresh air flow, and physically distance as much as possible;
 - Daily active screening for symptoms; and
 - Ensuring all workers understand their rights and entitlements and are supported to access healthcare services and other supports if they become sick.
- As essential workers, TFWs will be eligible for vaccination in Phase 2.

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

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of March 24, 2021 14:00)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
7,377	419	6,687	195
<p><u>In the last day:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 people tested positive, 51 people recovered, and there were no new deaths. • There were 53 new variant cases* identified. <p><u>Currently:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 113 new cases reported to the health unit for the current week. • 23 people are hospitalized for COVID-19. • There are 222 active variant cases*. • There are 11 ongoing outbreaks (workplaces: 5, educational settings: 4, institutions: 1, community settings: 1). 5 of these active outbreaks have known variant cases. • Young adults (18-34 years) have had the highest infection rate so far in March. <p><u>Since the last Partner Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have reported 298 new cases, 263 recoveries, and 2 new deaths. • There are 33 more active cases compared to the same day last week. • There are 3 fewer active outbreaks compared to the same day last week. • Cases reported to the health unit during the week of March 14 decreased by about 10% 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 24, 2021 14:00)*

Total doses administered	Doses administered previous day
73,263	2,355

Highlights:

- 14,565 immunizations have been provided since the last Partner Update.
- 3,045 LTC residents (95%), 3,497 retirement home residents (96%), and 12,424 adults 80 years of age and older (54%) have received their first dose.
- Over 3,700 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been administered to adults 60-64 years of age by Family Health Teams in Simcoe Muskoka.
- Over 17,600 people have received both required doses of the vaccine, including:
 - Nearly 5,200 hospital workers;
 - Over 5,000 LTC and retirement home staff and essential caregivers;
 - Over 3,300 retirement home residents; and
 - Over 2,800 LTC residents.

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

- Potential third wave brings difficulty as people 'exhausted' with restrictions ([article](#))
- Vaccines turned tide during deadly outbreak: Waypoint Medical Director ([article](#))
- Quick contact tracing to limit COVID-19 infections remains challenging, says doc ([article](#))
- Council agrees paid sick days should be priority for Ontario workers ([article](#))
- Police, health unit, bylaw officers meet tomorrow to discuss ongoing protests ([article](#))
- As vaccine supply increases, Gardner says get the shot wherever you can ([article](#))
- New booking process for AstraZeneca vaccine in Collingwood and Wasaga ([article](#))
- Muskoka's chambers of commerce express COVID-19 concerns to health unit ([article](#))
- 31 Simcoe county schools reporting active COVID-19 cases ([article](#))
- Mayor, residents unhappy with ongoing anti-restriction protests at Meridian Place ([article](#))
- 700 asymptomatic tests done at Simcoe County schools, no cases reported ([article](#))
- Barrie chamber calls for 'responsible business protocol' for pandemic framework ([article](#))
- Community organizations help connect seniors to COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka getting almost 30,000 COVID vaccines in next two weeks ([article](#))
- Bus service offers Muskoka residents free ride to vaccination clinics ([article](#))
- Georgian College team bringing vaccines to remote Indigenous community ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

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

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
333,690	15,047	311,380	7,263

As of today:

- There were 1,571 new cases, 1,531 resolved cases, and 10 deaths in the last day.
- There are a total of 1,389 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 50 cases of the South African variant, and 47 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- A total of 893 people are hospitalized for COVID-19, 333 people are in intensive care units (ICU) and 210 people are on ventilators.

- There are 610 ongoing outbreaks (schools and childcares: 177, health care settings: 133, workplaces: 120, other settings: 85, congregate living: 84).

Since the last Partner Update:

- There have been 11,734 new cases, 9,123 recoveries, and 76 deaths.
- There are 2,535 more active cases compared to the same day last week.
- There has been an increase of 253 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 3 cases of the South African variant, and 13 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- There are 152 more people hospitalized, 33 more people in the ICU, and 20 more people on ventilators compared to the same day last week.
- The average number of weekly cases is 1,676.

Vaccine status:

- A total of 1,676,150 vaccines doses have been administered to date, with 72,451 doses administered yesterday. 302,664 people in Ontario have been fully vaccinated.

Regional updates:

- Areas with the highest number of active cases per 100,000 population:
 - Peel (225.37), Thunder Bay District (201.47), Toronto (177.41), Lambton (164.25), and Sudbury & District (141.00).
- Areas with the highest number of active cases:
 - Toronto (4,846), Peel (3,114), York (1,166), Ottawa (763), and Hamilton (703).

Weekly Epidemiological Summary highlights: March 7-13, 2021:

- There was a 21.7% increase in weekly cases reported compared to the previous week. The number of weekly cases reported is the highest since the week of January 31.
- The number of cases associated with outbreaks in congregate living settings decreased by 37.0% compared to the previous week.

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 23, 2021 at 19:00 EDT)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
942,320	36,310	883,275	22,735

Yesterday:

- Canada reported 3,607 new cases and 19 deaths.
- New cases were reported in all provinces and territories except NL, NWT, NT and YT.
- Deaths were reported in BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, and QC.

Since the last Partner Update:

- In the last week, 26,452 people tested positive for COVID-19, 216 people died, and 21,443 people recovered.
- There are 1,338 more active cases of COVID-19 than there was a week ago.

Between March 8 and March 15, 2021:

- The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized increased from 1,521 to 1,644.
- The number of COVID-19 patients in ICU beds increased from 554 to 555.
- The number of COVID-19 patients mechanically vented increased from 301 to 320.

Weekly epidemiology update: March 7-13, 2021:

- New cases increased by 12% compared to the previous week, with an average of 3,161 new cases every day. Increases in weekly case numbers were reported in BC, AB, MB, ON, and QC compared to the previous week.
- New deaths decreased by 17% compared to the previous week, with an average of 32 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.
- According to forecasting, between 937,340 to 970,160 cumulative reported cases and 22,535 to 23,100 deaths are expected by March 28, 2021.

Key vaccine updates as of March 13, 2021:

- 6.80% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, including:
 - 42.25% of adults aged 80 or older;
 - 69.68% of health care workers targeted for priority vaccination; and
 - 88.49% of adults living in group living settings for seniors.
- 1.57% 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 24, 2021 at 14:41 CET)	
Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
123,902,242	2,727,837

In the last day:

- There were 461,606 new cases and 8,363 deaths.
- The U.S., Brazil, India, Poland, and Turkey reported the most new cases and Brazil, the U.S., Poland, Italy, and Russia reported the most deaths.

In the past week:

- Over 3.7 million new cases and 67,415 deaths were reported.
- Brazil, the U.S., India, France, and Poland reported the most new cases and Brazil, the U.S., Mexico, Italy, and Russia reported the most new deaths.

Highlights from Weekly Epidemiological Summary as of March 23, 2021:

- The number of new global COVID-19 cases continued to increase for the fourth consecutive week, with nearly 3.3 million cases reported last week.
- The number of reported new deaths plateaued, following six weeks of declining global deaths.

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

Provincial, National and Global Updates *(Since March 17, 2021 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Ontario's Action Plan: protecting people's health and our economy ([news release](#))
- Is helping people get their COVID-19 vaccination ([news release](#))
- Is supporting hospitals with additional funding during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Is moving 8 regions to new levels in the COVID-19 response framework ([news release](#))
- Supports colleges and universities impacted by COVID-19 ([news release](#))

- Booking system to expand to individuals 75+ as vaccine rollout accelerates ([news release](#))
- Is extending temporary wage enhancement for Personal Support Workers ([news release](#))
- Is investing in wastewater testing system to detect COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Ottawa region moving to Red-Control level of COVID response framework ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario published:

- Updated: COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Homes in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: Trends of COVID-19 Incidence in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Public Health Management of COVID-19 Exposure Post Infection ([report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification ([report](#))
- Updated: Adverse events follow immunization for COVID-19 in Ontario ([summary report](#))

Other Provincial News:

- Cabinet to consider easing restrictions on personal care and fitness businesses ([article](#))
- Ontario unveils more details about who will be eligible for a vaccine in Phase 2 ([article](#))
- Nearly 200,000 Ontarians 80 and up have not signed up for a COVID-19 vaccine ([article](#))
- Amazon facilities face scrutiny for COVID-19, other health and safety concerns ([article](#))
- Family doctors push for greater involvement in Ontario's vaccination campaign ([article](#))
- North York retirement home celebrates being COVID-free for a year ([article](#))
- Ontario government faces charter challenge over equity in its vaccine rollout ([article](#))
- Businesses seek expansion of COVID aid, finance minister faces difficult budget ([article](#))
- Experts urge education reform in wake of pandemic ([article](#))
- Queen's Park relaxing capacity restrictions for restaurants, bars ([article](#))
- Doctor raises alarm over increased indoor dining ([article](#))
- Health Minister Christine Elliott to receive AstraZeneca vaccine to ease hesitancy ([article](#))
- COVID-19 patients in Ontario spending longer in ICU ([article](#))
- Hospitals fear third wave will bring surge of younger patients, ICU cases ([article](#))
- Why some long-term care staff have hesitated to get COVID-19 vaccines ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- COVID-19 update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Announces funding for COVID-19 Safe Voluntary Isolation Sites under Ontario's High Priority Community Strategy ([news release](#))
- Extends Canada Emergency Business Account to help small businesses ([news release](#))
- Confirms benefits of AstraZeneca vaccine outweigh risks for use in Canada ([statement](#))
- Report validates Canada's economic response to COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Launches consultations to ensure labour protections meet new realities of working Canadians ([news release](#))
- Support to workers, families increases with passage of EI legislation and the coming into effect of recovery benefit regulations ([news release](#))
- Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer: [March 18](#), [March 20](#), [March 21](#), [March 22](#), [March 24](#)

Other National News:

- Why guidelines for what Canadians can do after getting vaccinated are unclear ([article](#))
- AstraZeneca's vaccine safe and effective, agency will add warning on blood clots ([article](#))
- Indigenous communities facing impact of COVID on mental illness and addiction ([article](#))
- Canadians still wary about allowing U.S. visitors after year of border restrictions ([article](#))
- Serious COVID-19 cases on the rise among younger people in B.C. ([article](#))

- Advocates critique rising jail figures in some provinces after initial COVID-19 fall ([article](#))
- Fewer COVID-19 cases in people 80 and up as vaccine programs expand ([article](#))
- Conservatives demand national plan to end COVID-19 restrictions ([article](#))
- Research doesn't back vaccine dose delay for seniors, chief science adviser ([article](#))
- Rights group loses bid for injunction against COVID-19 quarantine-hotel policy ([article](#))
- SK has least stringent COVID-19 measures among provinces, highest case rates ([article](#))
- Minister Anand says AstraZeneca doses could arrive from U.S. this week ([article](#))
- A year into the pandemic, COVID fatigue has given way to vaccine envy ([article](#))
- Canada on track to have one COVID-19 vaccine dose for every adult by July 1 ([article](#))
- Outbreak at British Columbia long-term care home includes vaccinated residents ([article](#))

Global Updates

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Director General continues to highlight the need for vaccine equity “Some countries are racing to vaccinate their entire populations while other countries have nothing. This may buy short-term security, but it’s a false sense of security. The more transmission, the more variants. And the more variants that emerge, the more likely it is that they will evade vaccines.” ([Remarks at COVID-19 media briefing March 22, 2021](#))
- COVID-19 highlights need to reboot global effort to end tuberculosis ([news release](#))
- PAHO Director warns of COVID-19 surge in the Americas ([news release](#))
- Director General shared that WHO “has recommended that the AstraZeneca vaccine’s benefits outweigh its risks, with tremendous potential for preventing infections and deaths from COVID-19... We urge countries to continue using this important vaccine” ([Remarks at COVID-19 media briefing March 19, 2021](#))
- Director General cautions “It’s vital that as countries roll out vaccines, they do not relax effective public health measures too quickly.” ([Remarks at COVID-19 Information Session March 18, 2021](#))

WHO published:

- Special Focus: Release of the WHO COVID-19 Detailed Surveillance Dashboard ([Weekly Epi Update p.4](#))
- Special Focus: Update on SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern ([Weekly Epi Update p.5-12](#))
- Statement on safety signals related to the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine ([statement](#))
- WHO interim recommendations for use of Janssen COVID-19 vaccine ([backgrounder](#))
- Science in 5, Episode #30: Vaccines – when and why? ([video](#))

Other International News:

- U.S. outlook improving as COVID-19 vaccinations rise and deaths fall ([article](#))
- India reports ‘double mutant’ COVID variant as daily deaths reach year’s high ([article](#))
- Europe tightens restrictions on vaccine exports, Canada expected to be unaffected ([article](#))
- Study finds long-term symptoms in people who had only mild COVID-19 ([article](#))
- AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine trial data questioned by U.S. agency ([article](#))
- U.S.-Canada land border restrictions extended for at least another month ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

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

Main COVID

- Updated main content to reflect that adults turning 75 and older are now eligible to book a vaccination appointment via the [provincial booking system](#)

- Added faith leaders to list of Phase 1 groups eligible for COVID-19 vaccination

Vaccine and Immunization

- Updated main content to reflect that adults turning 75 and older are now eligible to book a vaccination appointment via the [provincial booking system](#)
- Added reminder in main content that second-dose appointments are cancelled and to be re-booked for anyone who received their first vaccine before March 10
- Added new [expander bar](#) with eligibility criteria and pre-registration link for faith leaders
- Updated Huntsville clinic location under expander bar "[Community clinic information](#)"

Operating your Business Safely

- Posted revised public health guidance document under "[Food Operators](#)" expander bar
- Posted revised [SMDHU Guidance Document for Licensed Child Care Settings](#) and [Child Care FAQ](#) under "[Licensed Child Care](#)" expander bar

New HealthFAXes:

- **March 16, 2021:** [COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #10: COVID-19 Vaccination Registration Open to those 75-79 Years Old, Reminder of Dose 2 Appointment Delay](#)
- **March 19, 2021:** [SMDHU's HealthFAX gets a new image and will be available exclusively by e-mail, Register now](#)

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