

COVID-19 Update for Partners

March 31, 2021

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Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

Vaccine rollout update

- On March 25, we opened vaccine appointment pre-registration on our [website](#) to individuals turning 70-74 years old and [moderate priority healthcare workers](#). As of March 29, adults 70 years of age and older (born in 1951 or earlier) are now eligible to book an appointment directly through the [provincial booking system](#).
- We continue to operate community immunization clinics 7 days a week, including over the coming holiday weekend, in an effort to reach as many people eligible as possible.
- As vaccine supply and the province allows, we will open up eligibility to the following groups as per the [Guidance for Prioritization of Phase 2 Populations for COVID-19 Vaccination](#):
 - Adults by age, decreasing in 5-year increments;
 - Individuals with the highest risk and high-risk health conditions;
 - Residents, essential caregivers, and staff in high-risk congregate settings, and;
 - Adults 50 years of age and older in COVID-19 Hot Spot Communities, starting with older individuals and decreasing in age by 5-year increments.
- Following these groups, we will be providing immunization to remaining individuals with at-risk health conditions and essential workers who cannot work from home.

Immunization plans for homebound residents

- In partnership with paramedic services, Home and Community Care, and the Barrie & Community Family Health Team, we will soon be providing immunization to Simcoe Muskoka residents who are housebound and eligible for COVID-19 vaccination (approximately 800 people).
- Until recently, there has not been a COVID-19 vaccine available that could be moved from location to location due to storage and handling requirements. With approval now to move doses of the Moderna vaccine, we can provide immunization to this group of people where they live.
- Home and Community Care will be reaching out to their homebound patients to set this up in the coming weeks.

Immunization for the education sector

- Staff working in the education sector are one of many groups that warrant vaccination due to their exposure risk as essential workers. We are following provincial guidance and will be providing immunization to this group in Phase 2.
- There is provincial and health unit consideration being given to when it would be most appropriate to vaccinate educational staff who have higher risk of exposure due to the nature of their role (e.g. providing health care or personal support services for students with special needs).

AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine status

- To date, over 4,400 AstraZeneca vaccines have been administered by FHTs in Simcoe Muskoka to adults 60 to 64 years of age. We anticipate getting more of this vaccine for FHTs to vaccinate individuals aged 60 and above.
- In alignment with recommendations from the National Advisory Council on Immunization (NACI), Ontario will not be using the AstraZeneca vaccine for individuals under 55 while the situation and data are being reviewed by Health Canada. This vaccine is currently available in Ontario pharmacy and primary care settings for adults 60 years and older.

Indigenous-focused COVID-19 immunization clinics

- We have been working with Indigenous healthcare providers to host immunization clinics for Indigenous adults and their household members.
- In partnership with Mamaway Wiidokdaadwin Primary Care Team, Chigamik Community Health Centre, and Beausoleil Family Health Centre, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) held a vaccine clinic for Indigenous adults and their household members last Friday in Midland. The day began with a community Elder blessing the vaccine, a smudge ceremony, and a drum circle. The clinic was very successful and 398 people were vaccinated.
- There was also an immunization clinic held on March 30 in Barrie for Indigenous adults and their household members.
- Eligible Indigenous individuals are also welcome to pre-register for a vaccine appointment at any of our community immunization clinics via our [website](#).

Guidance for Easter celebrations

- Given high levels of COVID-19 transmission in the community, it is important that people do not let their guard down over the Easter holidays, **regardless of vaccination status**. Past holiday gatherings have led to a measurable increase in COVID-19 transmission.
- We encourage people to celebrate with loved ones in a way that does not put people at risk. Gathering with immediate household members only or hosting virtual gatherings are the safest options at this time.
- Those who plan to gather with people outside their household should make informed choices and choose lower risk activities and settings:
 - Gathering outdoors is much safer than gathering indoors. Follow outdoor gathering limits, maintain physical distancing, and use a mask if you cannot maintain 2-metres distance.
 - I strongly advise people not to have indoor gatherings. If you do choose to gather indoors, maintain physical distancing, wear a mask, and have no more than 5 individuals gathered.
 - At any gathering, it is important to engage in frequent handwashing and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Individuals should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms daily. If you have symptoms, get tested and self-isolate, avoiding all gatherings.

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

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status *(As of March 31, 2021 14:00)*

Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
7,699	447	6,970	198

In the last day:

- 46 people tested positive, 52 people recovered, and there were no new deaths.
- There were 71 new variant cases* identified.

Currently:

- There have been 130 new cases reported to the health unit for the current week.
- 35 people are hospitalized for COVID-19.
- There are 221 active variant cases*.
- There are 11 ongoing outbreaks (institutions: 4, workplaces: 3, educational settings: 3, congregate settings: 1), including 6 active outbreaks with known variant cases.

Since the last Partner Update:

- We have reported 322 new cases, 283 recoveries, and 3 new deaths.
- There are 28 more active cases and 12 more people hospitalized for COVID-19 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 21 increased by nearly 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](#)

*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 31, 2021 14:00)*

Total doses administered	Doses administered previous day
93,483	3,730

Highlights:

- 20,220 immunizations have been provided since the last Partner Update.
- Over 75,000 people have received their first dose, including:
 - 3,049 long-term care (LTC) residents (95%);
 - 3,507 retirement home residents (97%), and
 - 17,393 adults 80 years of age and older (76%).
- Over 4,400 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been administered to adults 60-64 years of age by Family Health Teams in Simcoe Muskoka.
- Over 18,000 people have received both required doses of the vaccine, including over 3,300 retirement home residents and over 2,800 LTC residents.

Local Media Updates *(Since March 24, 2021 Partner Update)*

- Catholic school board tells parents to prepare in case of temporary closure ([article](#))
- Tay wants level playing field for smaller businesses during pandemic ([article](#))
- Anti-mask protest at Angus school causes stir ([article](#))
- New COVID vaccine booking error causing people to be turned away from clinics ([article](#))
- No plan to stop anti-lockdown protests in Barrie as long as they remain peaceful ([article](#))
- Virtual Q&A to offer insight on safety for upcoming farmers' market season ([article](#))
- Still no COVID cases reported through asymptomatic testing in local schools ([article](#))

- Pandemic leads to ‘unprecedented’ hiring surge, budget increase at SMDHU ([article](#))
- Midland seniors council looks to remember those lost to COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Barrie program helps connect seniors to COVID-19 vaccines ([article](#))
- Why Simcoe Muskoka should prioritize visible minorities for vaccination ([article](#))
- New grant program to help city’s small businesses on the horizon ([article](#))
- Efforts increase to keep foreign farm workers protected from COVID-19 ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

Ontario *(As of March 31, 2021, 10:30)*

Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
349,903	20,155	322,382	7,366

As of today:

- There were 2,333 new cases, 1,973 resolved cases, and 15 deaths in the last day.
- There are a total of 1,892 confirmed cases of the U.K. variant, 70 cases of the South African variant, and 92 cases of the Brazilian variant.
- A total of 1,111 people are hospitalized for COVID-19, 396 people are in intensive care units (ICU) and 252 people are on ventilators.
- There are 678 ongoing outbreaks (schools and childcares: 239, workplaces: 149, health care settings: 133, other settings: 79, congregate living: 78).

Since the last Partner Update:

- There have been 16,213 new cases, 11,002 recoveries, and 103 deaths.
- There are 5,108 more active cases compared to the same day last week.
- There are 218 more people hospitalized, 63 more people in the ICU, and 42 more people on ventilators compared to the same day last week.
- The average number of weekly cases is 2,316

Vaccine status:

- A total of 2,192,253 vaccines doses have been administered to date, with 89,873 doses administered yesterday. 315,820 people in Ontario have been fully vaccinated.

Regional updates:

- Areas with the highest number of active cases per 100,000 population: Peel (281.38), Toronto (254.98), Durham (172.02), York (156.23), and Hamilton (154.59).
- Areas with the highest number of active cases: Toronto (6,965), Peel (3,888), York (1,734), Ottawa (1,253), and Durham (1,111).

Weekly Epidemiological Summary highlights: March 14-20, 2021:

- There were 10,839 cases reported during the week of March 14. This is the highest number of weekly cases reported since the week of January 24.
- Outbreaks in workplace and elementary school settings accounted for the highest number of reported outbreaks and about one-third of ongoing outbreaks.

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 30, 2021 at 19:00 EDT)*

Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
976,598	46,395	907,277	22,926

Yesterday:

- Canada reported 4,879 new cases and 26 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, 34,278 people tested positive for COVID-19, 191 people died, and 24,002 people recovered.
- There are 10,085 more active cases of COVID-19 than there was a week ago.

Between March 15 and March 22, 2021:

- The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized increased from 1,629 to 1,778.
- The number of COVID-19 patients in ICU beds increased from 555 to 622.
- The number of COVID-19 patients mechanically vented increased from 320 to 337.

Weekly epidemiology update: March 14-20, 2021:

- New cases increased by 10% compared to the previous week, with an average of 3,474 new cases every day. Increases in weekly case numbers were reported in BC, AB, MB, SK, ON, NB, NS, PEI, and NT.
- New deaths decreased by 7% compared to the previous week, with an average of 29 deaths reported every day.
- The number of weekly hospitalizations and ICU admissions increased compared to the previous week for the first time since early January 2021.
- Daily case rates remain highest among those 20-39 years of age.
- According to forecasting, between 973,080 to 1,005,020 cumulative reported cases and 22,875 to 23,315 deaths are expected by March 28, 2021.

Key vaccine updates as of March 20, 2021:

- 9.18% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, including:
 - 59.69% of adults aged 80 or older;
 - 75.38% of health care workers targeted for priority vaccination; and,
 - 91.05% of adults living in group living settings for seniors.
- 1.66% 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 31, 2021 at 10:55 CET)

Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
127,619,612	2,791,953

In the last day:

- There were 438,647 new cases and 8,098 deaths.
- The U.S., India, Brazil, Turkey, and Poland 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 64,116 deaths were reported.
- Brazil, the U.S., India, France, and Turkey reported the most new cases and Brazil, the U.S., Mexico, Italy, and Poland reported the most new deaths.

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

- The number of new global COVID-19 cases continued to increase for the fifth consecutive week, with all regions reporting an increase in weekly cases.

- The number of reported new deaths increased for the second consecutive week, increasing by 5% 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 24, 2021 Partner Update)*

Provincial Updates

The Ontario Government:

- Doubles support for parents with new Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit ([news release](#))
- Expands domestic vaccine manufacturing and pandemic preparedness ([news release](#))
- Supports the tourism and hospitality sectors during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Expands vaccination booking to individuals aged 70+ in some regions ([news release](#))
- Is adjusting public health measures for activities in Grey – Lockdown level ([news release](#))
- Ontario’s Action Plan doubles Ontario small business support grant ([news release](#))

Public Health Ontario published:

- Updated: COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))
- Updated: COVID-19 Regional Incidence and Time to Case Notification ([epi summary](#))
- Updates to PHO’s Variants of Concern laboratory testing ([blog post](#))
- Monitoring COVID-19 Variants of Concern ([blog post](#))
- Updated: Trends of COVID-19 Incidence in Ontario ([surveillance report](#))

Other Provincial News:

- ‘Don’t make plans for Easter’: Ford hints at another lockdown as cases soar ([article](#))
- Ford promises announcement Thursday as ICU admissions hit new high ([article](#))
- Doctors, health professionals urge Lecce not to close schools after spring break ([article](#))
- New data shows pandemic ‘completely out of control’ in Ontario, science adviser ([article](#))
- Ontario loosens restrictions as concern over rising cases, hospitalizations grow ([article](#))
- Ontario COVID-19 surge could force doctors to make life-and-death decisions ([article](#))
- April break for Ontario’s schools to go ahead as planned, Lecce says ([article](#))
- COVID hospitalizations surging among ages 30 to 50, doctor says ([article](#))
- Scarborough clinic offering COVID-19 vaccine to undocumented workers ([article](#))
- Toronto tells teachers to brace for online learning amid increasing COVID cases ([article](#))
- After outbreak in retirement home, families want mandatory vaccines for staff ([article](#))
- Hundreds of ICU patients transferred between ON hospitals as admissions rise ([article](#))
- Pop-up clinics offer Indigenous people in Ontario easier access to vaccinations ([article](#))

National Updates

The Government of Canada:

- Joint statement on the WHO-Convened COVID-19 origins study ([statement](#))
- Reminds travellers returning to Canada of COVID-19 border measures ([news release](#))
- Use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in younger adults ([statement](#))
- Takes further action to confirm benefit-risk profile of the AstraZeneca vaccine ([statement](#))
- Invests in new research to address COVID-19 variants ([news release](#))
- Announces more support for vaccines, healthcare, municipalities ([news release](#))
- Health Canada issues label change, guidance on the AstraZeneca vaccine ([statement](#))
- Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer: [March 25](#), [March 27](#), [March 28](#), [March 29](#), [March 31](#)

Other National News:

- Canadians much less trusting of AstraZeneca than other COVID-19 vaccines ([article](#))
- Pfizer to send five million additional COVID-19 vaccine doses to Canada in June ([article](#))
- Why Canada is suspending use of AstraZeneca vaccine in people under 55 ([article](#))
- ‘Stronger’ measures needed across Canada to suppress COVID-19 resurgence ([article](#))
- Quebec, Ontario say many vaccine appointments unfilled, ask seniors to act ([article](#))
- Canada LTC homes have worst record for COVID deaths among wealthy nations ([article](#))
- Tam says Canada facing ‘very tight race’ between COVID variants and vaccines ([article](#))
- Younger people getting sicker, faster with COVID-19, doctors say ([article](#))
- COVID-19 vaccines may require regular updates until infections die down ([article](#))
- Pandemic’s toll on mental health of mothers exceeds fear of researchers ([article](#))
- B.C. opens social closeness at LTC homes, other provinces review policies ([article](#))
- Quebec says one dose enough if you’ve had COVID-19 ([article](#))
- COVID hospitalization costs \$23,000 per stay, four times as much as average ([article](#))

Global Updates

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- WHO calls for further studies, data on origin of SARS-CoV-2 virus ([news release](#))
- Global leaders unite in urgent call for international pandemic treaty ([news release](#))
- Director General continues to call for vaccine equity: “I’m asking countries... to donate as many doses as they can... There are plenty of countries who can afford to donate doses with little disruption to their own vaccination plans. The more countries that donate ASAP, the more doses we will have to share with countries who need them desperately.” ([Remarks at March 26 media briefing](#))

WHO published:

- Special Focus: COVID-19 and Health Care Workers ([Weekly Epi Update p.4-5](#))
- Special Focus: Update on SARS-CoV-2 Variants ([Weekly Epi Update p.6-9](#))
- The J&J COVID-19 vaccine: What you need to know ([feature story](#))
- WHO-convened global study of origins of SARS-CoV-2: China part ([joint report](#))
- Protecting refugees and migrants during COVID-19 ([feature story](#))

Other International News:

- Pfizer study suggests COVID-19 vaccine is safe, protective in younger teens ([article](#))
- EU says ‘no evidence’ to restrict use of AstraZeneca vaccine ([article](#))
- China pushes to expand virus origin search beyond its border ([article](#))
- CDC director feels ‘impending doom’ amid new spike in U.S. COVID-19 cases ([article](#))
- COVID-19 deaths keep spreading in countries that lack vaccine access ([article](#))

SMDHU Resources

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

Main COVID

- Updated main content to reflect that individuals turning 70 years of age or older are now eligible to book a vaccine appointment via the provincial system
- Updated list of eligible groups who can pre-register to include moderate priority health care workers as well as transplant recipients and some cancer patients who have received Dose 1
- Posted notice advising adults 70-74 years of age who pre-registered between March 25-27 to book directly via the provincial system if they have not yet received a booking code

Vaccine and Immunization

- Updated main content to reflect that individuals turning 70 years of age or older are now eligible to book a vaccine appointment via the provincial system
- Posted notice advising adults 70-74 years of age who pre-registered between March 25-27 to book directly via the provincial system if they have not yet received a booking code
- Added new expander bar: "[Transplant recipients & some cancer patients who have received Dose 1 can now book Dose 2](#)"
- Updated "[Health Care Workers](#)" expander bar to reflect that moderate priority healthcare workers are now eligible to pre-register
 - [Preparing for your appointment](#)
 - Added information in main content on how to book transportation to an appointment
 - Updated content under "[At your appointment](#)" expander bar

Assessment Centres and Testing

- Updated information for all assessment centres, including Easter holiday hours

Operating your Business Safely

- Posted updated [guidance document](#) for [Food Operators](#)
- Posted updated [guidance document](#) for [Indoor and outdoor events and gatherings](#)
- Posted updated [guidance document](#) for [Recreational Water Facilities](#)
- Posted updated [guidance document](#) for [Personal Service Settings](#)
- Posted revised [Section 22 Class Order](#) and [Section 22 FAQ](#) for [Employers of temporary foreign workers](#)

Partners and Municipalities

- Posted revised [guidance document](#) for [Farmers' Markets](#)
- Posted [Revised Class Order to protect the health of all temporary foreign workers](#)
- Posted revised [guidance document](#) for [Places of Worship](#)

Enforcement

- Posted new charge issued in the 'Summary of SMDHU Enforcement Actions' table

Individuals and Families

Parents and Parents-to-be

- Posted resource "[I am pregnant or breastfeeding, should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?](#)"

New HealthFAXes:

- **March 25, 2021:** [COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #11: COVID-19 Vaccine Registration Open to Those 70 to 74 Years Old and Moderate Priority Health Care Workers](#)
- **March 30, 2021:** [COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #12: Those 70 to 74 Years Old Can Now Book on Provincial Booking System and Updated Dose 2 Interval for Transplant and Cancer Patients](#)

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](#)