

Coronavirus: COVID-19
Current Update – April 19, 2021

As of April 19th, 2021, Canada has a total of 1, 127, 046 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Ontario has 421, 442 cases and Toronto has 133, 076 cases.

Ontario reports more than 4,400 new COVID-19 infections, positivity rate at 10 per cent

There were 4, 447 new cases confirmed today, 4, 250 new cases yesterday, and 4, 362 new cases on Saturday. Of the 2, 202 COVID-19 patients in Ontario's hospitals, 755 are currently in ICU units, and 516 are breathing with the help of a ventilator.

Of today's new cases, there are 1, 299 in Toronto, 926 in Peel Region, 233 in Ottawa, 233 in York Region, 227 in Hamilton, 205 in Durham Region, 203 in Niagara Region, 169 in Halton Region, and 114 in Simcoe-Muskoka. Currently, there are 42, 863 active cases of COVID-19 throughout the province.

Ontario's positivity rate is 10.5%. For context, throughout the pandemic, health experts have said that any positivity rate above 5% is "too high." The average number of new cases per day based on the past 7 days is 4, 347. This time last week, the seven-day average was 3, 781. In the last 24 hours, 19 more people have died due to the virus.

Since yesterday, health officials have confirmed another 2, 467 cases of the UK variant and 4 more cases of the Brazilian variant. In total, the province has confirmed 36, 579 cases of the UK variant, 211 cases of the Brazilian variant, and 104 cases of the South African variant.

At least 346, 005 Ontarians have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Since the province began vaccinating people in December, the province has given out 3.9 million vaccines.

On Friday, the provincial government announced that the stay-at-home order will be extended for another two weeks, so now it will end on May 20. The government also announced new public health measures, including restricting non-essential travel between provinces, shutting down non-essential construction, limiting public outdoor gatherings, and closing outdoor recreation sites such as golf courses and basketball courts.

The government also closed outdoor playgrounds, however this decision was reversed on Saturday after significant complaints from the public. Playgrounds are still open.

The provincial government reversed another controversial decision that they had announced on Friday. Ontario's Solicitor General had said that the police would be granted special powers to stop any pedestrian or driver and ask them: their name, why they are outside, and their home address.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association called the new order unconstitutional, and many people in Ontario expressed their disagreement with it. Also, multiple large and small police forces across the province released statements that they would not exercise their newly-granted powers.

On Saturday, the Solicitor General published a written statement that the police will no longer be able to do any of these things. Instead, police will only be able to stop people who they have reason to believe are participating in an "organized public event or social gathering."

Sources:

1.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-reports-more-than-4-400-new-covid-19-infections-positivity-rate-at-10-per-cent-1.5392942>

2.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/premier-ford-reverses-decision-to-close-ontario-playgrounds-amid-backlash-1.5391546>

3.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-walks-back-new-pandemic-police-powers-following-widespread-backlash-1.5391464>

An update on the status of vaccine deliveries and receiving outside help in Ontario

On Thursday, Canada's Procurement Minister announced that, by the end of April, Canada will receive only 650, 000 doses of the Moderna vaccine, instead of 1.2 million doses, which was the original plan. Out of those 1.2 million doses that Canada was expecting to receive, 500, 000 of them were going to be given to Ontario.

What's more, Moderna is now saying that the arrival of up to 2 million doses of their vaccine may be delayed until July. This is due to a "slower than anticipated ramp up of their production capacity" that is affecting a number of countries.

However, some good news came on Friday! Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that an additional 8 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will be coming over the next few months.

These Pfizer shots will be given in addition to the doses that Canada has already purchased. With the new contract, Canada is now on track to have a total of 24 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine between April and June, meaning more people will receive vaccines sooner than we expected.

Previously, Trudeau said that he believes all Canadians will be able to get their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by September. On Friday, he was asked if he believes this date could be moved up due to this procurement of Pfizer vaccines, but Trudeau stood by his timeline.

On Friday, the Procurement Minister announced that Canada will receive an initial shipment of 300,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine during the week of April 27, which will be delivered to the provinces in early May. She said “more substantial deliveries” will be coming around late May and early June, and into the summer.

As for AstraZeneca, Canada is planning to receive a total of 4.1 million vaccines by the end of June with most deliveries set to come between July and September. Starting Tuesday, the AstraZeneca vaccine will be offered to individuals 40 years old and over in pharmacies and primary care settings. Several prominent Ontario physicians posted their approval of the new minimum age for the AstraZeneca vaccine via social media.

Currently, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends giving the vaccine to people who are 55 and older. NACI is still in the process of deciding whether to change its recommendation that AstraZeneca should not be offered to those under the age of 55. Health Canada has approved the use of this vaccine for any adult who is 18 years old or older.

In an effort to address concerns over the vaccine, Premier Doug Ford, Ontario Minister of Health Christine Elliott and Toronto Mayor John Tory all received their first dose of the AstraZeneca shots on camera.

The Canadian Medical Association called on the federal government to focus vaccination efforts on areas in urgent need, such as Ontario. On Friday, Trudeau said that his government is “standing by” to deploy the Canadian Red Cross to help with Ontario’s vaccination efforts.

A spokesperson for Ontario Premier Doug Ford’s office turned down this support from the Red Cross, saying: “While we appreciate the Prime Minister’s offer, unless it is matched with an increase in supply, we do not need the Red Cross at this time for the administration of vaccines in Ontario. We do not have a capacity issue, we have a supply issue.”

Meanwhile, on the same day, the Ford government formally asked all provinces and territories for help with healthcare resources, specifically “the assistance of 620 professionals to support Ontario hospitals.” This includes support for the province’s Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

On Sunday, the provincial government issued a statement which stated that “the Premier has begun reaching out to consulates to try and secure more vaccine supply for Ontario from our international

allies.” This is “in response to the latest cut in Moderna shipments” and waiting for “a federal decision on the lowering of the age limit for AstraZeneca.”

Also on Sunday, Trudeau posted a video update, where he made many key announcements. First, federal healthcare workers will be redeployed to Ontario, and the Greater Toronto Area in particular. Second, he announced that the federal government will coordinate and cover all of the costs associated with relocating healthcare workers who are sent from other provinces, including via military aircraft. Third, Trudeau said the federal government will also work with Ontario cities to deploy rapid tests to hot spots, especially for essential workers and workplaces. The timeline for this deployment was unclear.

Lastly, Trudeau repeated the offer that he made to the provincial government on Friday, which is to deploy the Canadian Red Cross to help with Ontario’s mobile vaccination teams. Then, he reiterated that the Minister of Public Safety approved the provincial government’s request to extend the deployment of the mobile health units in Toronto and Hamilton, which will free up even more hospital beds.

Later that day, Canada’s Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said that the federal government decided to take a “leadership role” after Ontario reached out to other provinces and territories for assistance.

Sources:

1.<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/feds-secure-8-million-more-pfizer-doses-as-moderna-cuts-coming-shipments-1.5390234>

2.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/trudeau-offering-canadian-red-cross-to-help-with-ontario-s-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-1.5390357>

3.<https://www.cp24.com/news/naci-weighing-whether-to-change-oxford-astrazeneca-recommendation-1.5389948>

4.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-to-lower-age-eligibility-for-astrazeneca-vaccine-to-40-1.5392503>

5.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-turns-to-other-provinces-for-urgently-needed-help-with-overloaded-icus-1.5390044>

6.<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/premier-ford-reaching-out-to-other-countries-to-acquire-more-covid-19-vaccines-government-says-1.5392260>

7.<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/federal-government-to-send-health-care-workers-rapid-covid-19-tests-to-ontario-1.5392296>

Ontario’s COVID-19 Vaccine booking portal:

Those eligible for a vaccine can book here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>.

Or by phone at: 1-833-943-3900.

For general information about vaccines, call: 1-888-999-6488.

In Toronto? Here's a safe transportation option to go to your vaccine appointment:

Wheel-Trans is committed to providing vaccine rides to the elderly and people with disabilities in Toronto. Wheel-Trans is offering individual rides to City-run mass vaccination sites, pharmacies, doctor's offices and clinics that are giving out vaccines. Customers may be joined by one Support Person on their Wheel-Trans ride.

You may be eligible for Wheel-Trans service if your disability prevents you from using the TTC's conventional transit for all or part of their trip.

If you are not yet a Wheel-Trans customer, and you think you may qualify for Wheel-Trans service, you are invited to apply by calling Wheel-Trans Customer Service at 416-393-4111, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Existing Wheel-Trans customers can book their rides to and from their vaccine appointments by calling Wheel-Trans Reservations at 416-393-4222, seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. or through the Wheel-Trans Self-Booking Website. Access the website by clicking here: <https://mywheel-trans.ttc.ca/SelfBooking2020/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fSelfBooking2020>.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

March of Dimes

Caregiver Webinars

Caregiver Connection Group – Caregiver conversation series – 10 weeks

Date: Starting Thursday, March 4th, at 2:00pm – every Thursday, join anytime

To register for any or all sessions: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/march-of-dimes-canada-caregiver-conversation-series-tickets-142228614615?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

If you or someone you know uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), and requires resources related to COVID-19, please contact Sarah (sarah.nydp@gmail.com) and she can assist you in accessing and/or creating various communication tools.

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at www.ontario.ca/coronavirus. Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675

Please refer back to previous updates as lots of important information has been provided that may still be relevant. If you have any questions or require more information on how you can protect yourself and those around you from the COVID-19 virus, please contact our Outreach Communication

Facilitator Sarah, at 416-222-4448 or

sarah.nydp@gmail.com