



## Health Coalition's New Report Tracks Alarming Spread of COVID-19 in Ontario's Third Wave: Hardest Hit Industries

As the curve of the third wave rises steeply, the Ontario Health Coalition released its new report today [Ontario's Reopening and the Third Wave: The Spread of COVID-19 in Workplaces & Schools](#) tracking the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces, schools and childcare through February and March to date.

- On March 28, Ontario reported 2,448 new cases of COVID-19, increasing the 7-day average to 2,038 per day;
- As of March 1, the 7-day average case count was half of what we are seeing now, at 1,098 per day;
- These rates are higher than at any point in the first wave which peaked at 571 cases on April 24, 2020, and the rise of the third wave to date is significantly steeper than the second wave.

Hospitalization rates have also increased since February:

- March 1 there were 659 Ontarians hospitalized with COVID-19;
- on March 13 that number increased to 689;
- by March 29 the number has significantly increased to 985, a high we have not seen since February 10.

Hospitals in the GTA are over capacity and 34 ventilated COVID-19 patients have had to be transferred to make room in overwhelmed ICUs. On Sunday, Dr. Michael Warner, a Toronto ICU doctor, reported that all of his ICU patients have tested positive for a variant of concern, their average age is 53, and the majority of them are essential workers.

“The rise of cases in the third wave to date is much steeper than the second wave. Without stronger health measures, there are grave risks for Ontarians, especially those required to work outside their homes, and the real possibility of hospitals being overrun,” warned Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “Essential workers’ neighbourhoods are showing almost three times the rate of variants of concern. Our tracking shows alarming numbers of COVID-19 cases in education, shelters, correctional facilities, warehouses and distribution centres.”

Since Ontario re-opened, the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces has continued to outpace growth in the general population. Congregate settings experienced the highest growth in case numbers during the shutdown (December and January) and continued to show significant increases in February. Hardest hit were correctional facilities where cumulative cases grew 56% in February. In March the growth finally slowed down, however there are still significant active corrections outbreaks. Cumulative cases in shelters grew 60% in February and were reported in most mid-size cities in Ontario. Outbreaks in Toronto and Hamilton shelters are ongoing and have increased alarmingly in March.

In the first two weeks of March there were 1,489 new cases in elementary and secondary schools, a 17% increase. Cases in childcare continued to steadily rise throughout the lockdown and into March, increasing 12% in the first two weeks of March.

Canada Post had an outbreak with 300 cases associated at the end of February and Amazon's distribution centre in Brampton was forced to close in March after more than 600 people contracted COVID-19, three hundred of which contracted the virus in recent weeks alone.