

February 10, 2021

Ontario Health Coalition Releases Tracking of UK Variant COVID-19 As COVID-19 U.K. Variant Spreads Ford Government Can Not Fail Us Again: Stronger Enforced Public Health Measures Are Missing

Toronto – The Ontario Health Coalition has tracked all the cases of the U.K. variant (B. 1.1.7) for which we can find public information. The Coalition released the data today with a call for the Ford government to take fast action to protect Ontarians. The spread of the variant in Ontario is happening quite quickly and there are now an initial set of large outbreaks in long-term care (Barrie), food production (North York) and an apartment building (North Bay). It should be of deep concern.

In the U.K. the variant has been traced back to September 20. By mid-December 60 % of cases were the new variant which spread very quickly across the Southeast, London and the East of England, overwhelming hospitals and resulting in a hard lockdown. The variant is reported to be 40 – 70 percent more infectious. In a new report published in the [British Medical Association Journal](#), two new studies have found it may be associated with a higher death rate.

“The Ford government failed to act quickly enough to stop the huge increase in COVID-19 cases and deaths prior to the second wave. It failed again to do so prior to Hanukkah/Christmas. They cannot fail to do so again,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “Almost 1,000 staff and residents in long-term care have died since December 31 alone. Many of those deaths could have been prevented with adequate staffing, proper PPE, meaningful consequences for for-profit long-term care homes that do not follow safe infection control practices and provide resources for staffing and care. In addition, high community transmission rates have imperilled the lives of people in long-term care and other congregate care settings. Failure to act quickly enough to reduce the community spread has been a fatal political choice by the Ford government.”

“Yesterday the Ford government announced plans to permit more contacts between people in their plans to “open” up but did not announce safety measures to prevent the rapid spread of the UK variant of COVID-19. Our provincial government cannot simply repeat the same mistakes over and over again. We are calling on the Ford government to immediately provide clear, enhanced and enforced safety measures to protect Ontarians.”

There are now 227 confirmed cases of B.1.1.7. variant as of February 8, 2021¹ and at least another 200 suspected cases waiting for confirmation. According to the Ontario Public Health Epidemiologic Summary, the following is the breakdown by region:²

- 11 in Durham
- 1 in Haldimand-Norfolk
- 1 in Halton
- 1 in Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington
- 4 in Middlesex London
- 6 in Ottawa
- 20 in Peel
- 2 in Sudbury and District

¹ <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-covid-19-report-en-2021-02-09.pdf>

² <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-covid-19-report-en-2021-02-09.pdf>

- 1 in Region of Waterloo
- 130 in Simcoe Muskoka
- 30 in Toronto
- 20 in York Region

227 TOTAL – Note: In some cases, these numbers are lower than those reported by local Public Health Units (see highlighted discrepancies below.)

There were 109 cases on February 1, 2021³ and there were 38 cases on January 25, 2021.

Summary of UK COVID-19 Variant Cases by Region:

Toronto: 9 of 95 cases in meat plant outbreak in North York confirmed so far as U.K. variant:

January 26, Toronto Public Health notified of a potential outbreak at Belmont Meats in North York. On Monday, February 1, Toronto Public Health issued a news release revealing that 78 people had tested positive for COVID-19 in this outbreak and one household member of the infected staff had also tested positive. Belmont Meats voluntarily closed January 28.⁴ On February 8, Toronto Public Health revealed that there were another 7 cases associated with this outbreak and the total is now 95 people infected.⁵ Of these, nine of the cases are confirmed to be the U.K. variant. Five of those people live outside of Toronto.⁶

York Region Confirms 20 cases of UK variant, 57 under investigation:⁷

Total variant cases identified: 77

Confirmed B.1.1.7. (UK variant): 20

Mutation Detected (lineage not confirmed): 57

(Note: the 57 with unconfirmed lineage are not shown in Public Health Ontario's data.)

Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit reports 133 cases of UK variant, another 64 awaiting confirmation and 100 tests waiting for confirmation in the Roberta Place outbreak:

As of Tuesday February 9, 2021: 133 local cases have been tested positive for the COVID-19 variant of concern UK B.1.1.7 and an additional 64 cases have screened positive (awaiting confirmatory testing).⁸

(Note: Public Health Ontario's data is a day behind this report and does not include the 64 identified variant cases awaiting confirmation.)

- Since January 8 when the outbreak was declared at Roberta Place long-term care home in Barrie all 169 residents have tested positive and 69 have died.⁹ 105 staff members were also infected¹⁰ as were four essential caregivers, one of whom has died, and 5 "external partners".¹¹ Officials have confirmed that several people have tested positive for the U.K. variant at Roberta Place, while nearly 100 others at the long-term care facility have received a positive test result for a COVID-19 "variant of concern." Testing is still underway to

³ <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-covid-19-report-en-2021-02-02.pdf>

⁴ <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/toronto-covid-19-outbreak-at-meat-production-facility-believed-to-be-linked-to-u-k-variant-1.5291037>

⁵ <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/toronto-links-7-more-cases-of-covid-19-variant-first-seen-in-u-k-to-outbreak-at-meat-production-facility-1.5300125>

⁶ <https://www.cp24.com/news/seven-new-covid-19-cases-at-toronto-meat-plant-linked-to-highly-infectious-b-1-1-7-variant-1.5300141>

⁷ <https://www.york.ca/wps/portal/...>

⁸ <https://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/topics/infectious-diseases/a-h/covid-19>

⁹ <https://barrie.ctvnews.ca/31-days-of-heartbreak-at-roberta-place-ltc-in-barrie-ont-1.5299465>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://globalnews.ca/news/7612481/63-residents-dead-roberta-place-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/>

confirm the exact variant strain, but Simcoe Muskoka's medical officer of health, Dr. Charles Gardner, has said it's believed all residents are infected with the U.K. variant.¹²

Northern Ontario reports cases in three health units including one linked to the Extencicare LTC home in Kapuskasing and the large apartment outbreak in North Bay is spreading, resulting in school closure:¹³

- The first person with the U.K. variant was found in Sudbury and District's health region on January 24 and was a person with a history of international travel.
- On Thursday February 4 the North Bay Perry Sound health region identified another person with the UK variant, also attached to international travel.
- On February 4 the Porcupine Health Unit said the case in the Cochrane District involves an individual linked to the COVID outbreak at Extencicare Kapuskasing, which has infected 68 people and has resulted in 11 deaths due to the disease. Officials with the long-term care home said as of 11 a.m. Thursday morning, the facility has 46 active cases of COVID-19, 15 involving staff members and 31 residents.

(Note: Public Health Ontario's data reports 2 cases in Sudbury and District and none in the other health regions.)

- This week an outbreak was declared at an apartment building in North Bay. On Tuesday, public health officials said that 19 people in the building and 2 visitors tested positive and at least three were likely the UK variant. More than 100 people at Skyline-Lancelot Apartments were tested over the weekend and health officials are asking the rest of the residents to get tested. Sunset Park Public School has been closed after one person infected at the school was contact traced to the apartment outbreak.¹⁴

¹² <https://globalnews.ca/news/7612481/63-residents-dead-roberta-place-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/>

¹³ <https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/covid-variant-now-detected-in-three-northeastern-ontario-areas-1.5297045>

¹⁴ <https://www.cp24.com/news/covid-19-outbreak-with-likely-variant-cases-declared-at-north-bay-apartment-building-1.5301799>