



April 12, 2021

## **Record Case Numbers, COVID-19 Third Wave Emergency: Ontarians Need Clearer Message, Stronger Protections- Coalition**

Toronto -- Yesterday was the worst day for the spread of the pandemic so far. In one 24-hour period, 4,456 Ontarians were diagnosed with COVID-19. In that single day, 21 lives were lost to COVID-19.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> wave is devastating, deadly, and it is overwhelming our health care system.

Yesterday's 4,456 new infections marks the single day highest rate of virus spread of any point in the pandemic. (The previous worst day which peaked at 4,249 was on January 8.)

1,646 Ontarians are currently hospitalized with COVID-19 (up 133 since yesterday). Ontario is now reporting 619 patients in Intensive Care Units with COVID-19, 408 of whom are intubated. There are more Ontarians struggling to survive in our ICUs than at any time during the first two waves of the pandemic.

"We fear that Ontario employers and Ontarians have not comprehended fully the gravity of the pandemic at this point. It is imperative that employers understand the risk they are putting their employees in by requiring them to work on site. We need stronger protections for workers, paid sick time, and public health measures need to be much more seriously enforced, particularly workplace shutdowns and safety protections for workers," warned Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "The third wave is turning into a tidal wave, and it is devastating to our health care system. The numbers represent real people, many of whom are seriously ill and the number of human beings dying in our province as a result of the virus is far beyond any level of acceptability."

### **News from the frontlines:**

*"We had 85 people in the waiting room. Normally we have 10-15 and the wait times were around 7 or 8 hours. One person with a punctured lung waited 8 hours to get treated. It's gotten really bad. People, who I work with, are burning out it has just become too much strain." Dr. Kashif Pirzada, Toronto Emergency Physician, April 9.*

*"I have a patient in his early 30s in my ICU with COVID-19. He was completely healthy prior to acquiring his infection at work. He is not an essential worker. He works in the financial services industry in an office job. But his employer mandated that he show face time at the office and come in." Dr Michael Warner, ICU Doctor, Michael Garron Hospital (Toronto), April 5.*

*"We are seeing that in our area up to 90% of the cases are the variants. Our sentiment is that it never should have come to this. We've been begging for weeks. We saw this coming and we have been begging for weeks for the government to make the right decision and shut down the province and shut down the schools." Dr Lisa Salamon-Switzman, Toronto ER Physician, April 9.*

*"Saw 20 severe COVID patients yesterday, 14 were workplace related transmissions. Stay-at-home won't fix that. Temporarily close manufacturing & distribution of non-essential goods. Do everything possible to protect essential workers: paid sick leave +N95 [masks]+2x/week rapid test + vaccinate." Dr. Brooks Fallis, Toronto Critical Care Physician, April 9.*

*“Our ICU is at capacity. We are taking over other units in the hospital because of how many Covid patients we have & onboarding nurses from other units to help... I know 'a nurse is a nurse' but I can only imagine how overwhelmed they must be feeling right now. Third wave is real.” Critical Care Nurse, April 10.*

*“On paper Ontario has about 2300 ICU beds, in practice we have far fewer because we simply cannot staff them. We can open up SickKids to adult patients, we can more move patients to Kingston and beyond, but eventually we will run out of places to move patients because we won't have enough trained staff to care for them.” Dr Michael Warner ICU Doctor Michael Garron Hospital (Toronto), April 10.*

*“We are losing a COVID ICU patient under age 50 every 2.8 days. In Wave 2 we lost one every 5 days and in Wave 1 we lost one every 6 days.” Dr Michael Warner, ICU Doctor Michael Garron Hospital (Toronto), April 7.*

*“It took: 5 MDs, 4 ICU RNs, 4 RTs, 1 Perfusionist and 3 Critical Care Paramedics 3 hours to save my 40-year-old COVID-19 patient. It would have cost the Ontario Government \$114 dollars to allow her husband to take a day off work from his factory in known outbreak.”*

*\*His patient later lost her battle with COVID-19*

*Dr Michael Warner ICU Doctor Michael Garron Hospital (Toronto), April 3.*

Response to the gaining amplitude of the third wave is coming too slowly and it is risking the health and lives of Ontarians. Between April 1 when the provincial government said it was applying an “emergency brake” leaving open stores and malls with reduced capacity, and April 8 when the province finally called for a “lockdown” (which still leaves many non-essential businesses open) 24,209 Ontarians contracted COVID-19. In that 7-day period 128 Ontarians died. It is imperative that the gravity of the situation be fully understood by Ontarians.