



January 7, 2021  
For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editors

## **Emergency: COVID-19 Crisis Situation In Ontario Requires Stronger Measures AND Stronger Supports for People Impacted, Today is Deadliest Day of Pandemic So Far**

Toronto – Today is the deadliest day of the pandemic so far, 89 people died in the last 24-hour period. By every measure the situation is critical, warns the Ontario Health Coalition, and there can be no question remaining that stronger measures are needed to control the devastation the virus is wreaking. At the same time, stronger supports for people who are the most impacted need to be an integral part of the strategy.

### Hospitals:-

- Public hospitals, which continue to make superhuman efforts to fill gaps, provide vital leadership and support across the health system, and keep hospital services open at the same time, are now at or above full capacity across the board.
- In Toronto, physicians are publicly reporting no beds, no resuscitation rooms, ICUs full, nowhere to admit patients.
- The Burlington field hospital is open and patients from full hospitals in the region are being transferred there.
- Morgues in London and Windsor are now full.
- The Ontario Hospital Association is calling the situation “extremely serious”, has put into effect its surge plans and is warning that ICU capacity (across the province) will be exceeded in coming weeks. It is planning for large scale transfers of patients.
- ICUs from Chatham through the GTA are full (both with COVID patients and other patients). Surgeries and other care are being cancelled as a result.

### Long-Term Care:-

- 218 long-term care homes are in outbreak. Despite the continued denial, downplaying and dissembling by the Minister of Long-Term Care, the numbers are truly alarming. There are 160 new cases in the last 24 hours in long-term care, and 34 new deaths. There are 2,488 currently active cases in the last 24-hours (1,258 residents 1,230 staff) the most so far in the second wave. The deaths, which follow infections by several weeks, have escalated dramatically month over month since October.
- Tragically, we have to report the escalation of deaths in long-term care in the second wave as follows:
  - October 15 => 39
  - November 15 => 229 that is 190 in a month
  - December 15 => 576 that is 347 in a month
  - January 6 => 1,045 that is 469 in 3 weeks

Statement from the Ontario Health Coalition:

“The Ontario Health Coalition is in full support of stronger public health measures, including stronger safety and infection control measures in open businesses, full public reporting of outbreaks, more effective and coherent shutdowns.

We do not say this lightly. We understand that shutdowns have impacts on health and well-being and that shutdown measures must include much stronger support measures for individuals, families, communities and local businesses.

Just as the terrible toll of the virus impacts some people more than others—racialized communities, working class and low-income people, the elderly, people in supportive congregate care among others – so too the shutdowns impact some groups more than others.

Understanding this, Ontarians need to take extraordinary and stronger measures to save the lives and health of people in our province and at the same time, individuals whose employment has been or will be impacted need full support for income and housing, and local businesses need full supports to survive the pandemic.

Families at risk and people, including young people, with mental health needs, need extra resources and support.

Our government can do a much better job of providing coordination and supports for these protections.

Across the board we need a much more competent response from our provincial government, including:

- Stronger, more coherent public health measures -- including a fast ramp up of testing, contact tracing and quarantine capacity in public health and labs -- must be undertaken now so that the province can get the spread of the virus under control.
- There must be fewer contacts among people to reduce community and workplace transmission and stronger public health measures across the board, including shutdowns and stronger safety measures in open businesses, must be undertaken.
- Ontarians need to stay home as much as possible.
- The crisis in staffing capacity in long-term care must be addressed without any further delay. We need a large-scale paid recruitment, training and deployment of staff, with improved wages and working conditions for those staff. This needs to start right away. LTC homes must have systematic interventions at a very early point in outbreaks to stabilize staffing and ensure infection control practices are followed. Resources for cohorting must be provided, including field hospitals or similar. Hospital teams must be sent into all of the homes where staffing has fallen to unsafe levels and the military is needed as an emergency measure where hospital overloads are delaying decisions to send in teams. Long-term care homes that are demonstrating negligence and incompetence must face strong accountability measures, orders, fines and license revocations.
- Wherever possible, public field hospitals or the like need to be staffed and opened to help with the overload of residents in long-term care and retirement homes with COVID-19 and the hospital overload. All-hands-on-deck are needed now. The province must help with a major recruitment drive to get staff to ramp up this capacity.
- The vaccine roll-out needs to be coherent, competent and much faster. All long-term care and retirement home staff, residents and essential care givers must be vaccinated as a priority without delay. The thousands of health professionals from primary and community care that have volunteered to staff 24/7 vaccination clinics and teams must be integrated into the roll-out to maximize capacity and public health nurses must be included as leaders in the planning because they have the experience and expertise for mass-scale vaccine roll out.
- Community care, which is taking more of the burden of COVID-19 cases as hospitals are full, must be provided with clear directives to ensure staff have proper PPE including N95 masks.”