

COVID-19 Update

For more information:
Canada.ca/coronavirus

Information for Indigenous communities:
Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous



INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA – Ontario Region – February 3, 2022

Omicron has forced us to think differently about the pandemic. Getting vaccinated, staying home, reducing contacts and following other public health measures are still critical to protecting the most vulnerable – but now these actions serve another important role: making sure enough people are healthy in order to keep communities running. This is a shift in thinking and messaging. After nearly two years, it is natural that it takes time to adjust to this new phase of the pandemic.

This phase has also shifted the way we do things: individuals testing positive may now need to notify their own contacts; isolation requirements have been adjusted; and even the common symptoms of COVID-19 are changing. This may feel destabilizing, as undoubtedly, some of us had come to terms with the state of affairs. All this said, while Omicron remains extremely transmissible, there is comfort in knowing that the chances of hospitalization or serious health outcomes due to COVID-19 remain lower among vaccinated populations, especially those with a third dose.

Remember that what you are doing is unprecedented. You are leading your communities through some of the most complicated circumstances in living memory. Thank you for your continued dedication and leadership.

Michael O'Byrne, Acting Regional Executive and Anne Scotton, Regional Director General

Ontario set to loosen restrictions

On Monday, January 31, 2022, Ontario began to gradually ease public health measures. Social gathering limits were increased to 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors. ISC continues to recommend that individuals limit their close contacts and wear masks when appropriate to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Ontario has also increased or maintained capacity limits at 50 per cent in indoor public settings, including restaurants and bars; retailers; shopping malls; gyms; cinemas; meeting and event spaces; recreational amenities and amusement parks; museums and similar attractions; casinos and other gaming establishments; and religious services, rites or ceremonies. Enhanced proof of vaccination and other requirements continue to apply in existing settings.

The Province is scheduled to further relax restrictions no sooner than February 21, 2022. You can read more about Ontario's reopening plan [here](#).

Safe Return to School

To help ensure a safe return to school, ISC regional officials have reached out to all First Nation schools in Ontario, including Federal Schools to identify gaps and work with the Province to assist with options to ensure that they have sufficient PPE, rapid antigen tests and HEPA filters.

If you have any further questions about the Safe Return School Fund or the COVID 19 Public Health Fund, please contact Susan Troniak, Director Education and Social Programs by email at Susan.Troniak@sac-isc.gc.ca or by phone at (807) 355-3263.

ISC Ontario Region flowing \$21 M in COVID-19 public health funding directly to First Nations communities

On January 20, 2022, Indigenous Services Canada announced it will provide an additional \$125 M in funding directly to First Nations across the country to support public health efforts as Omicron continues to spread.

ISC Ontario Region is pleased to confirm that we have received \$21 M of this funding for dissemination to Ontario First Nations. This funding will be allocated using the same formula that has been used to distribute the formula-based portion of the Indigenous Community Support Fund. Funding will flow through existing agreements and allocations will be processed by ISC finance in the coming weeks.

This funding can be used by First Nations to support community surge capacity in response to COVID-19. This may include, but is not limited to, continued administration of COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters, implementation of rapid testing, surge infrastructure, surge staff and resources, food security to support self-isolation and supports to update, review and activate pandemic response plans. You can read more [here](#).

COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario

*All data reflects totals from 8 PM on February 2, 2022

- **60,241** Daily doses administered
- **30,832,550** Total doses administered
- **11,770,908** People fully vaccinated



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Update on Operation Remote Immunity 3.0

Phase two of Operation Remote Immunity 3.0 (ORI 3.0) continues. During the week of February 7, 2022, teams from the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority are scheduled to visit Keewaywin; Pikangikum; Cat Lake; Moose Factory; Moosonee; Webequie; Deer Lake; Fort Albany; Slate Falls; Kashechewan; Poplar Hill; and Attawapiskat. Please note that this schedule is subject to change. First, second, and third doses for adults as well as pediatric doses are being offered in accordance with provincial guidance.

Indigenous Services Canada's national COVID-19 news release

ISC is publishing regular news releases to provide updates on COVID-19 in Indigenous communities across Canada. You can find the releases in the [newsroom section](#) of the ISC website.

Health Canada authorizes COVID-19 oral antiviral treatment; ISC Ontario Region receives first delivery

On January 17, 2022, Health Canada authorized the combination of two antiviral drugs, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir (brand name PAXLOVID™), to treat adults with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk of progressing to serious disease, including hospitalization or death. The active ingredient nirmatrelvir in PAXLOVID™ works by stopping the virus from replicating.

Until now, authorized medications for COVID-19 have had to be taken in a hospital or healthcare setting. PAXLOVID™ is the first COVID-19 therapy that can be taken at home. The drug is intended for use as soon as possible after diagnosis of COVID-19 and within five days of the start of symptoms. The treatment consists of two tablets of nirmatrelvir and one tablet of ritonavir taken together by mouth twice per day for five days. You can read more about the Health Canada authorization [here](#).

On January 17, 2022, the Government of Canada received an initial shipment of 30,400 treatment courses of Pfizer's COVID-19 oral antiviral treatment, PAXLOVID™, with 120,000 more expected to be delivered by the end of March. You can read more [here](#).

The first shipment of 420 PAXLOVID™ antiviral treatment courses has been received by ISC Ontario Region. The treatment courses are being prepared for distribution to remote and isolated First Nations communities in the province, and ISC is working with local medical providers and Health Authorities regarding distribution and allocation of treatment courses. Due to a limited supply of the antivirals, the treatment courses will be sent to the communities with the greatest need and this early stage.

Although this new treatment may prevent some hospitalizations among vulnerable populations, [vaccination and public health measures remain the best way to protect yourself and your community against infection and severe disease](#). It remains true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Proper mask use and care

It is essential to make sure masks are used, stored and cleaned properly. A mask should fit well and be worn properly to effectively limit the spread of COVID-19. Keeping the [mouth and nose covered](#) while wearing a mask is critical to the mask's ability to protect the wearer and others from potentially infectious respiratory particles.

It is important to keep one's mask clean when not in use, or when eating or drinking. **When not in use**, store the mask in a clean paper or cloth bag until it is put on again.

Make sure to wash hands or use alcohol-based sanitizer after putting on, adjusting or taking off a mask. Any extra items that are used to improve mask fit, like braces or filters, should be properly cleaned and disinfected regularly. Disposable masks and filters should be properly discarded in a garbage container.

New COVID-19 Communications Resources

The OneHealth Portal is routinely updated with new communications resources to assist with your communications efforts. Notably, you can now find the following new items on the [Ontario OneHealth.ca Portal](#):

- An updated version of the [Regional COVID-19 Communications Resources List](#).

Indian Residential School Information and Resources

The Chiefs of Ontario has compiled a [new webpage](#) with valuable information on how to access mental health support for Indian Residential School survivors. The webpage also includes resources to support Residential School searches and details on available funding.

COVID-19 Cases

As of February 1, 2022 at 5:00 PM

- **7,385** confirmed on reserve
- **715** active cases
- **51** deaths
- **6,619** resolved (89.6%)

Please feel free to contact the FNIHB Ontario COVID-19 generic inbox: sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca if you or your community members have any information needs.