

COVID-19 Update

For more information:
Canada.ca/coronavirus

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



INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA – Ontario Region

December 2020

The holiday season is fast approaching and we recognize that it will be hard for many of us to limit holiday gatherings and participation in large-scale festivities. Celebrating holidays alone, or with your immediate household members can sound rather dreary. After all, who wants to cook an elaborate meal for just a few people?

COVID-19 continues to surge in most parts of the province; some cities in Ontario have even moved back into lockdown. We know that COVID-19 fatigue has set in and the situation is made even more difficult by cold winter months. However, please encourage and remind members of your communities to continue to remain diligent and abide by Public Health Agency of Canada's recommendations and guidelines, limit gatherings and only go out for essentials.

We hope this fourth monthly COVID-19 update provides informative and timely messaging for you to share, including the new three-layer mask recommendations, as you work to ensure your community members stay safe and healthy with family and friends through this winter season. Garry Best, Regional Executive and Anne Scotton, Regional Director General

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

At least two different types of vaccines are expected to become available in Canada in early 2021, and planning is underway in Ontario to ensure distribution of vaccines, including to Indigenous persons. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has recommended that Indigenous persons be treated as a priority for vaccination given the risk for more severe disease in the population. Health Canada is currently reviewing information on the vaccine data to ensure that all the requirements for approval will be met. Anti-vaccination information is already being spread, and communities are encouraged to direct their residents to reliable sources of information on vaccines.

Rapid Testing to Support COVID-19 Response

The Province of Ontario has begun to deploy new COVID-19 rapid tests to ensure that they work as expected compared to the regular testing process. FNIHB is working with the Province, Ontario Health, and the National Microbiology Laboratory to create a one stop process to access new testing methods and provide necessary guidance and training.

COVID-19 Funding

The Ontario Region is accepting funding requests under the following streams: [Indigenous Community Business Fund](#), and [Public Health Measures](#).

Requests for funding under the Public Health Measures should be directed to the generic COVID-19 inbox. Requests for funding under Indigenous Community Business Fund should be directed to the Lands and Economic Development (LED) Ontario inbox.

For more information on the COVID-19 funding streams currently accepting needs-based requests, please see the attached table in the December 3, 2020, meeting scheduler.

COVID-19 Funding Allocated To-Date

Since March 1, 2020, approximately \$366.4M has been made available to Ontario Region First Nations, Métis and Indigenous organizations to support COVID-19 response efforts, and \$278.1M to provide additional supports for children and families, for a total of \$644.5M.

In preparation for Covid-19 vaccine roll-out, ISC is working on developing a list of communications resources. If you would like ISC Communications to share these resources directly with your community's communications contact, [please submit](#) the name and contact information for your community communications advisor/lead.

Nursing retention and recruitment

ISC recognizes the challenges faced by First Nations communities as a result of COVID-19 and is closely monitoring the need for primary health care resources. All facilities are staffed and operational to the end of the calendar year and we continue recruitment activities going into the new year. We continue to use a four week rotation with two weeks of self-isolation and charter transport of the nurses to the communities. As a measure to support retention and access to nurses, a supplemental two week charter has been introduced. Infection prevention protocols for these nurses will not change.

As additional COVID-19 testing platforms become available, it is anticipated that their use will also be incorporated into the staffing protocols. Interdisciplinary health care teams continue to be developed, where available, including community paramedics, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and registered practical nurses.

Universal Broadband Fund

ISC Ontario Region has been working across business lines to support First Nations with their connectivity projects. As COVID-19 has further highlighted these needs, we have convened calls throughout the pandemic with leadership from other federal departments, provincial ministries and First Nations to discuss the broadband connectivity gap in Ontario.

On November 9, 2020, we welcomed the announcement from Innovation, Science and Economic Development, regarding [the launch of the Universal Broadband Fund](#). Of the fund's \$1.75 billion budget, \$50 million will be allocated for mobile Internet projects that primarily benefit Indigenous Peoples, including projects along highways and roads, and in Indigenous communities, where mobile connectivity is lacking. More information on this program can be found [here](#).

Resources

New Three-Layer Mask Recommendation

The Public Health Agency of Canada is now recommending Canadians choose three-layer non-medical masks with a filter layer to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as they prepare to spend more time indoors over the winter.

- Two layers should be tightly woven material fabric, such as cotton or linen.
- The third (middle) layer should be a filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene fabric.

Modes of Transmission of COVID-19

The Public Health Agency of Canada has [updated its web content](#) on the modes of transmission of COVID-19 to include aerosol transmission.

Free Digital Apps Help Track COVID-19 Transmissions

The Government of Canada is encouraging Canadians to [download their free COVID-19 apps](#) to help slow the spread and stay informed on the latest updates.

NEW THIS MONTH – Sharing your Journey

ISC Ontario Region Communications is inviting you to share with other communities, the ways that have worked and wise practices that demonstrate innovative and unique solutions or partnerships to address challenges posed by COVID-19.

Please send any ideas for stories to the generic [COVID-19 inbox](#) and a member of the ISC Ontario Communications team will contact you, or your community's Communications representative, to discuss approaches.

COVID-19 Cases

*As of Dec 1, 2020, @ 6:00 p.m.

192 confirmed in-community	2 deaths
8 active cases	182 resolved (95%)



FNIHB Ontario COVID-19 generic inbox: sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca