

NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Extending Pause on Lifting Capacity Limits in Remaining Settings Where Proof of Vaccination is Required

Cautious Approach Key to Protecting Our Progress as Province Learns More About the Omicron Variant

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[Ministry of Health](#)

TORONTO — The Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, is extending its [pause](#) on the [lifting of capacity limits](#) in remaining higher-risk settings where proof of vaccination is required while the province continues to monitor trends in public health and health care indicators and learns more about the Omicron variant. These settings include:

- food or drink establishments with dance facilities such as night clubs and wedding receptions in meeting/event spaces where there is dancing;
- strip clubs; and
- sex clubs and bathhouses.

“In line with Ontario’s cautious approach to date, as public health and medical experts learn more about the Omicron variant, we are continuing to take a deliberate pause in reopening to protect our hard-fought progress against COVID-19,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “As Ontario continues to take rapid action to protect against COVID-19 and variants, I encourage everyone to get their first, second or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.”

While an increase in cases was always anticipated as more people socialize indoors due to colder weather, Ontario continues to have one of the lowest case rates in the country, well below the national average. Despite this, Ontario’s cautious approach and high vaccination rates have meant hospital and intensive care unit capacity continues to remain stable. As of December 6, 2021, there were 165 COVID-19 related critical illness patients (CRCI) in intensive-care units, representing only 7 per cent of overall ICU capacity in the province.

To ensure Ontario’s hospitals were prepared to respond to any scenario, Ontario invested an additional \$1.8 billion, bringing total new investments in hospitals to \$5.1 billion since the start of the pandemic. This additional funding includes \$760 million to create over 3,100 beds and \$300 million to reduce surgical and diagnostic imaging backlogs. The province is also

investing \$342 million to add over 5,000 new and upskilled registered nurses and registered practical nurses as well as 8,000 personal support workers.

Because of this increased capacity, Ontario is able to safely admit approximately 300 patients with COVID-related critical illness into ICUs without putting at risk urgent surgeries. This would allow the province's hospital system to effectively manage the intake of ICU patients projected as the most likely scenario by expert modellers in the coming months. Ontario can quickly surge up capacity further if necessary.

“While an increase in the number of cases was always expected as we entered the winter months, with the emergence of the Omicron variant we must continue following the measures we have in place that have been working for us,” said Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health. “Over the coming weeks and months, we need to stay the course on reaching those who have not yet been vaccinated. If you have not yet received the vaccine, please do so today and if you are eligible for a booster dose, please book your appointment to provide yourself with an extra layer of protection. Achieving the highest vaccination rates possible remains our best defence against COVID-19 and variants.”

The months ahead will require continued vigilance. That's why Ontario has continued to take a cautious approach to public health and workplace safety measures, such as continuing to require masking in indoor public settings throughout the pandemic.

The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table rightly points out that the current public health measures are effective against COVID-19 and variants, including Omicron, and that the COVID-19 vaccine remains highly effective against severe illness or hospitalization against the virus. In addition, every eligible Ontarian is strongly recommended to get vaccinated or receive their booster if they are eligible as soon as possible. If you have a child aged five to 11, book an appointment to get your child vaccinated today.

The government and the Chief Medical Officer of Health will continue to monitor trends in key public health and health care indicators and emerging data on the Omicron variant and will continue to take swift action to ensure the health and safety of Ontarians.

Quick Facts

- As of December 13th, approximately 5.5 million Ontarians are eligible to receive a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Ontarians are encouraged to [book their appointment](#) as soon as possible.
- Children aged five to 11 are eligible to book their appointment to receive the vaccine. To get answers to their questions, parents, caregivers and children are encouraged to call the Provincial Vaccine Confidence Line that can be accessed by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900, or visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) to book a confidential phone appointment with a SickKids clinician.

- As we head into the colder months and more people gather indoors, the government is [enhancing its COVID-19 testing strategy](#) by expanding the number of testing locations and making it more convenient to access publicly funded testing for those who need it.
- On [November 10, 2021](#), Ontario paused the lifting of capacity limits in remaining higher-risk settings outlined in [A Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term](#), where proof of vaccination is required. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution as the province monitors public health trends.
- Local medical officers of health continue to have the ability to issue advice, recommendations or instructions under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (ROA) as well as Section 22 orders under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, and municipalities may enact by-laws, to target specific transmission risks in the community.
- As of [September 22, 2021](#), Ontarians are required to be [fully vaccinated](#) against COVID-19 with proof of vaccination along with identification to access certain public settings and facilities unless an exemption applies under [O. Reg. 364/20](#). The [enhanced vaccine certificate with official QR code](#) and the free, made-in Ontario Verify Ontario app are now available

for download, making it easier, more secure and convenient for individuals to provide proof of vaccination where required to do so.

Additional Resources

- [Ontario Accelerating Booster Eligibility to Adults Aged 50+](#)
- [Ontario Confirms First Two Cases of Omicron Variant](#)
- [COVID-19 Variant of Concern Omicron \(B.1.1.529\): Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance](#)
- [Ontario Pausing the Lifting of Capacity Limits in Remaining Settings Where Proof of Vaccination is Required](#)
- [Ontario Releases Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term](#)
- [Using your Enhanced Vaccine Certificate: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- For public inquiries, please contact the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY for people who are deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired: 1-866-797-0007).
- For resources in multiple languages to help local communication efforts in responding to COVID-19, visit Ontario's [COVID-19 communication resources webpage](#).
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.