

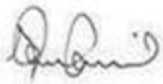
**From:** [Rachelle Cote](#)  
**Cc:** [Caroline Cox](#); [Nicki Duke](#); [\\_PHI](#)  
**Subject:** News Release: Ontario Further Strengthening Response to Omicron  
**Date:** December 17, 2021 4:49:02 PM

---

*On behalf of Dr. Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO / De la part de D<sup>r</sup> Corneil, médecin hygiéniste par intérim/Directeur exécutif*

Good afternoon,

The Government of Ontario has put additional public health measures in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. The measures go into effect on Sunday, December 19. Please see news release below.



Dr. Glenn Corneil  
Acting Medical Officer of Health/Chief Executive Officer  
**Timiskaming Health Unit**  
247 Whitewood Avenue, Unit 43  
P.O. Box 1090  
New Liskeard, ON P0J 1P0  
Tel: 705-647-4305 ext: 2254  
Fax: 705-647-5779

Ontario Logo



## NEWS RELEASE

# Ontario Further Strengthening Response to Omicron

## Additional measures to slow the spread as province accelerates booster dose rollout

**December 17, 2021**

[Premier's Office](#)

TORONTO — In response to the rapidly-spreading and highly transmissible Omicron variant, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, is applying additional public health and workplace safety measures, including capacity and social

gathering limits. These measures will help curb transmission and continue to safeguard the Ontario's hospitals and ICU capacity as the province continues to rapidly accelerate its booster dose rollout.

“Throughout this entire pandemic, we’ve never faced an enemy like Omicron given how quickly it spreads,” said Premier Doug Ford. “We need to do everything we can to slow its spread as we continue to dramatically ramp up capacity to get as many booster shots into arms as possible. Doing so is the best way to safeguard our hospital and intensive care units.”

The latest [modelling](#) suggests that the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant could put additional strain on Ontario's hospital capacity, making it critical to slow the spread as the government dramatically increases vaccine capacity and expands eligibility for third booster doses. The province recently doubled its vaccination capacity and continues to ramp up further to get as many vaccines into arms as possible. Over 156,000 doses were administered on December 16, 2021 with capacity increased to 200,000 to 300,000 in the coming days.

To further strengthen its [response](#) to Omicron and reduce opportunities for close contact as the province gets as many vaccines into arms as possible, Ontario is introducing a 50 per cent capacity limit in the following indoor public settings:

- Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments and strip clubs;
- Personal care services;
- Personal physical fitness trainers;
- Retailers (including grocery stores and pharmacies);
- Shopping malls;
- Non-spectator areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities (e.g. gyms);
- Indoor recreational amenities;
- Indoor clubhouses at outdoor recreational amenities;
- Tour and guide services; and
- Photography studios and services; and
- Marinas and boating clubs.

These limits do not apply to any portion of a business or place that is being used for a wedding, a funeral or a religious service, rite, or ceremony. Businesses or facilities will also need to post a sign stating the capacity limits that are permitted in the establishment.

To further reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, additional protective measures are also being applied:

The number of patrons permitted to sit at a table will be limited to 10 people and patrons will be required to remain seated in restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments, meeting and event spaces and strip clubs.

- Bars and restaurants, meeting and event spaces and strip clubs will be required to close by 11 p.m. Take out and delivery will be permitted beyond 11 p.m.
- Dancing will not be allowed except for workers or performers.
- Food and/or drink services will be prohibited at sporting events; concert venues, theatres and cinemas; casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments; and horse racing tracks, car racing tracks and other similar venues.
- The sale of alcohol will be restricted after 10 p.m. and consumption of alcohol in businesses or settings after 11 p.m.

In addition, to mitigate COVID-19 transmission that can occur at informal social gatherings, the province is also reducing social gathering limits to 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors.

These restrictions will come into effect on 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, December 19, 2021.

“This was not an easy decision to make before the holidays, but the evidence is clear that further public health measures are required to slow the spread of Omicron and prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “As we expand booster eligibility and continue our Team Ontario effort to get as many shots into arms as possible, I am urging every single person to get their vaccine if they haven’t already done so, and sign up for their booster shot as soon as possible.”

In addition, in response to emerging global evidence of substantial increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant, the Chief Medical Officer of Health is updating the personal protective equipment requirements outlined in Directive 5 to provide interim guidance to require N95s for health care workers providing direct care to or interacting with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID.

“As the rapidly spreading Omicron variant becomes the dominant strain of COVID-19 in Ontario, it is necessary to apply additional public health and workplace safety measures to reduce transmission, protect our health system and save lives,” said Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health. “We all have a role to play in keeping ourselves, friends, families, neighbours and communities safe this holiday season. Please follow all public measures and get vaccinated with your first, second or booster dose if you have not done so already. Omicron will not take a holiday.”

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

## Quick Facts

- The government is supporting bars, restaurants and other businesses with a licence to operate a liquor consumption premises by cutting wholesale prices for the alcohol they purchase from the LCBO, saving these businesses an effective 20 per cent when compared to retail prices. This change will provide approximately \$60 million in annual support to restaurants, bars and other businesses.
- Starting [Monday, December 20, 2021](#), individuals aged 18 and over will be eligible to schedule their booster dose appointment. Appointments will be booked three months (84 days) after a second dose as the province urgently expands booster eligibility to millions more individuals.
- To provide an additional layer of protection against COVID-19 and variants including Omicron, the province has launched a [holiday testing blitz](#) to offer rapid antigen tests to individuals free of charge at pop-up sites across the province, as well as at select LCBO stores across Ontario. Visit [Ontario.ca/holidaytesting](#) to find out when and where you can access free COVID-19 rapid antigen tests during the holiday season.
- Effective January 4, 2022, the use of the enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate with QR code and the Verify Ontario app will be required where proof of vaccination is required. Download by visiting <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/get-proof/>, or call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 to have your vaccine certificate mailed.
- 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.

## Additional Resources

- [All Ontarians 18+ Eligible for COVID-19 Booster Appointments at](#)

### Three-Month Interval

- [Ontario Launching Holiday Pop-Up Testing Blitz](#)
- [Ontario Taking Action to Protect Against Omicron Variant](#)
- [Responding to Omicron and Protecting Our Progress](#)
- [Ontario Accelerating Booster Eligibility to Adults Aged 50+](#)
- [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.
- For public inquiries call The Stop the Spread line at 1-888-444-3659. Open Monday to Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**We have recently updated Ontario Newsroom Subscription. You may receive additional emails. If you would like to update your subscription preferences or unsubscribe, click the 'manage your subscriptions' or 'unsubscribe' links down below.**