

# Medical Officer of Health: Report to The Board of Health

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# Contents

Medical Officer of Health Update ..... 2  
    COVID-19 Update ..... 2

# Medical Officer of Health Update

## COVID-19 Update

### *Cases*

On Monday, November 22, 2021, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit had the lowest case rate per 100,000 population in the province. However, due to the increase in cases among the surrounding districts (Sudbury, Algoma, Simcoe Muskoka, and Timiskaming most recently), it is anticipated that our case numbers will likely increase.

In the last seven days, we had 18 new cases, bringing our total case count to 895, with 636 in the Nipissing District and 259 in the District of Parry Sound. The Health Unit currently has 24 active cases. There are no individuals in hospital due to COVID-19.

Since the start of November, three COVID-19 outbreaks have been declared.

- Currently Barclay House has 2 active cases with 41 resolved. Without any further cases being identified, it is anticipated the outbreak will be declared over on Friday, November 26, 2021.
- The outbreak at Au Chateau has one active case with one resolved.
- The outbreak at St. Teresa School in Callander has one active case with one resolved.

To date, all cases in the outbreaks have been mild.

### *Age Cohorts*

Currently, the age group with the lowest vaccination rates are those aged 18-29 years with only 76% who have received at least one dose and 70% who are fully vaccinated. That means nearly one in four have yet to receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

79% of youth 12-17 years of age have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and 73% are fully immunized.

### *Vaccinations*

Locally, we have seen the benefits of vaccination in reducing severe outcomes associated with COVID-19. Locally, since June 1, 2021, less than 4% of fully immunized individuals who contracted COVID-19 were hospitalized and less than 1% were in ICU.

As of Monday, November 22, 2021, 88% of residents 12 years of age and older who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 84% of residents 12 years of age and older are fully vaccinated.

A total of 196,598 vaccinations have been provided in our district. Over the past week, vaccinations have increased somewhat, but only modestly. First, second, and eligible third doses are being booked into clinics. There are 11 clinics being held this week throughout the Health Unit district.

The Health Unit will be monitoring COVID-19 vaccination uptake/demand over the next month which will inform COVID-19 clinic planning over the Christmas holidays. Currently, no clinics are booked for the statutory holidays in order to give staff a well-deserved rest and time with their families. Vaccine demand is low presently and not considered as an emergency. Vaccine access throughout the district is

being supported by pharmacies and will continue over the holidays. Dates are being confirmed. If demand increases, more appointment bookings will be added to existing clinics and more clinics will be added if required to meet demand.

#### *Third Dose Eligibility*

There have been no changes to the third dose eligibility at this time. The 70+ age cohort has the highest percentage receiving a third dose of those eligible at 70% (70-79 years of age: 58%, 80+ years of age: 80%).

According to provincial statistics, third doses for the immunocompromised and health care workers have low uptake at approximately 14% and 10% respectively.

There is some anticipation the province may provide third doses to the general population in the new year in a staged age cohort manner. This decision should be informed by the available scientific evidence.

#### *5-11-Year-Olds*

On November 19, 2021, Health Canada approved the Pfizer pediatric COVID-19 dose (10 µg as opposed to the 30 µg adult dose) and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) made their recommendations. Health Unit planning has been ongoing for some time in preparation for the vaccine rollout for this age cohort. It is anticipated the vaccine will arrive mid-week with the potential to begin immunization on Thursday and/or Friday. Clinics specifically for the 5-11-year-olds are booked for this Saturday and Sunday. The provincial booking system, specifically for 5-11-year-olds was live as of Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

NACI has recommended an interval eight weeks between first and second dose to maximize immune response. They have also recommended a 14-day interval for other vaccines to be administered before or after a COVID-19 vaccine has been given. However, there is no safety concern and both can be given at the same time at the discretion of the health care provider (i.e. limited opportunity to immunize). The reason for the 14-day interval is to help identify which vaccine might be responsible for any adverse reactions that may occur. Studies to date have not identified any serious adverse reactions in this age group. There were no myocarditis/pericarditis events reported.

Vaccinations of this cohort is being supported by pharmacies and primary care. The Health Unit will provide vaccine to both and is supporting primary care with their COVID-19 clinic plans.

#### *6-Months – 4-Year-Olds*

It is anticipated in the first quarter that authorization for the 6-month to 4-year age group COVID-19 vaccinations will be approved. Planning is underway.

### *Schools*

The main contributor to outbreaks throughout the province has been elementary schools due to ineligibility to receive COVID-19 vaccine. There are now three cases associated with the Health Unit's only school outbreak at St. Theresa's school in Callander. Outbreak management was initiated and coordinated with the school and school board. The cohort was dismissed, case and contact management implemented, and infection prevention and control inspection being undertaken.

### *Influenza*

Influenza activity remains low in the province with only three cases of influenza A being reported up to November 13, 2021. There are no influenza cases within the Health Unit district. As indicated below, there has been a significant demand for flu shots in the Health Unit district. These statistics do not include primary care, pharmacies, long-term care homes, retirement homes, or hospitals, all of which who contribute significantly to the flu vaccine program.

#### **Flu stats - from October 26 to November 22, 2021: 3,523 total**

- 1,696 flu vaccines administered to the public at the Health Unit offices (In-House Clinics)
- 1,827 flu vaccines administered at Community Flu/COVID-19 Clinics
  
- **2019-2020 Flu Season: 2,301 total**
  - 2133 flu shots were administered at In-House Clinics
  - 168 flu shots were administered at Community Clinics
  
- **2020-2021 Flu Season: 5,030 total**
  - 3108 flu shots were administered at In-House Clinics
  - 1922 flu shots were administered at Community Clinics

### *Fall Priorities*

While recovery plans are being formulated, continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic is taking precedence. Fall priorities include:

- Continued case and contact management
- Vaccination of 5-11-year-olds
- Continued vaccination of first, second, and third doses for eligible groups
- Call Centre support for clinic bookings and general questions
- Communications
- Addressing human resource capacity issues
- Addressing staff fatigue, stress, and burnout
- Addressing backlog of the Ontario Public Health Standards programs and services as much as capacity will allow