

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force

General (Ret'd) Rick Hillier
Chair

25 Grosvenor Street
11th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 1Y6

COVID-19VaccineTaskForce@ontario.ca

Groupe d'étude sur la distribution des vaccins contre la COVID-19

Général (à la retraite) Rick Hillier
Président

25, rue Grosvenor
11^e étage
Toronto ON M7A 1Y6

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It's been almost six weeks since Ontario launched the first phase of the three-phased implementation plan of Ontario's COVID-19 vaccine program. Since then over 264,000 doses have been administered across the province. This is an amazing achievement and a bright light during a week where we have received sobering news on how this virus has taken hold in the province.

I have had the opportunity over the past weeks to hold meetings with many of our partners in this mission, including municipal leaders, public health unit Medical Officers of Health, CEOs of hospitals who have received vaccines and long-term care home operators. These meetings have been a way to connect with the leaders on the ground and to hear what is working, what we can improve on, to ask questions and provide solutions. The discussions will inform how we continue with our rollout and are a way to ensure connections are strong across all sectors – we are all in this together.

The public health units and local hospitals have played an enormous role throughout the pandemic. Vaccine distribution will be no exception. Our province will not have a one-size fits all approach to the vaccine rollout. From cities, small towns, rural communities and remote/fly-in parts of the province, we are going to rely on local implementation. As the situation is evolving rapidly, I urge the mayors and municipalities across the province to work closely with your public health unit as they implement the vaccine rollout for your community.

The Premier gave us a mission – to have all residents, health care workers, staff and essential caregivers in long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes in Peel, Toronto, York and Windsor-Essex vaccinated with their first dose by January 21, 2021. Thanks to the dedication of public health units, hospitals and long-term care and high-risk retirement homes, we have achieved this goal and more, with Ottawa, Durham and Simcoe Muskoka also completing their long-term care homes.

On January 19, 2021, we were alerted by the federal government that due to work to expand its European manufacturing facility, production of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine will be impacted for a few weeks. In fact, we will not receive any doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine next week. We will hear more in the coming days from the National Operations Centre about the vaccine that Ontario will receive.

Once we hear more from the National Operations Centre about Ontario's allocations, we will work closely with public health units and hospitals to plan and manage the new allocation amounts.

This will not stop us from getting to our most vulnerable Ontarians. A good plan allows you to be prepared for the unexpected. We have been able to work quickly to adjust to this news. Vaccination of residents, staff and essential caregivers of all long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes in Ontario will continue. Operation Remote Immunity, led by Ornge, includes the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine to 31 fly-in communities in Northern Ontario and continues to be a priority with an expected start date of February 1, 2021.

We have made incredible progress to date in our COVID-19 vaccine program, and we will continue to push forward. I look forward to our continued partnership.

Sincerely,

General (Ret'd) Rick Hillier
Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force