

**Ministry of Municipal
Affairs and Housing**

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December 22, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: Municipal Chief Administrative Officers and Clerks

SUBJECT: Extension of Emergency Orders and Provincial Response to the Omicron Variant

I am writing to you today about the Ontario government's ongoing work to protect Ontarians in the fight against COVID-19, including the rapidly spreading Omicron variant, and to ask you to consider any additional support that can be provided to help your local public health unit maximize vaccinations to protect the most vulnerable and all Ontarians. While cases were always expected to rise, the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant is requiring rapid adjustments to a changing situation and could put additional strain on Ontario's hospital capacity.

Vaccinations

To protect Ontario's progress in the fight against COVID-19, the Ontario government is rapidly accelerating its booster dose rollout by expanding eligibility to all individuals aged 18 and over, as well as shortening the interval to three months following an individual's second dose beginning Monday, December 20, 2021.

Public health units are at the forefront of this critical effort and municipalities can play a key role in supporting stretched public health resources. Public health units will need facilities to deliver vaccination clinics, including municipally-run facilities, and human resources in areas such as clinic management, operations and logistics, project management, data entry, and customer service.

I know that our public health units have valued your collaboration in this fight so far and I know many of you will have reached out already to your local Medical Officer of Health to offer your continued partnership in maximizing the delivery of critical vaccinations that will keep Ontarians safe and the economy open.

To enhance requirements related to proof of vaccination, the Ontario government also announced on December 10, 2021 a suite of new measures related to:

- Delaying the [lifting of proof of vaccination requirements](#) beyond January 17, 2022, aligned with the reopening plan that stipulated that doing so was contingent on the absence of concerning trends.
- Effective January 4, 2022, requiring the use of the enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code and the Verify Ontario app in settings where proof of vaccination is required. The QR code can be used digitally or by printing a paper copy. Individuals can download their enhanced certificate with QR code by visiting <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>.
- Strengthening the verification process for medical exemptions and clinical trial exemptions by requiring a certificate with a QR code. Organizations and businesses that are under the provincial proof-of-vaccination system will be advised to no longer accept physician notes as of January 10, 2022.
- Effective December 20, 2021, requiring proof of vaccination for youth aged 12 to 17 years participating in organized sports at recreational facilities.

Public Health Measures

As you may know, the Government has extended all emergency orders under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020* (ROA) until March 28, 2022. As the province continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, these extensions provide the government with the necessary flexibility to address the ongoing risks and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure important public health and workplace safety measures remain in place.

The Omicron variant has led to new challenges in Ontario's response to managing the COVID-19 pandemic. In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the government has approved amendments to [O. Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#), **which came into effect on Sunday, December 19th**.

In addition, effective December 19, 2021, to mitigate COVID-19 transmission that can occur at social gatherings, **the province is also reducing social gathering limits from 25 people to 10 people indoors, and outdoor gatherings are being reduced from 100 people to 25**. Social gatherings associated with weddings, funerals and religious services, rites or ceremonies are subject to these limits.

For further details, please see O.R. 364/20 as amended (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200364>).

Local Medical Officers of Health continue to have the ability to issue advice, recommendations or letters of instruction 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.

Compliance and Enforcement

As a reminder, for offences under the Reopening Ontario Act (ROA), police and other provincial offences officers, including First Nation Constables, special constables, and municipal by-law officers, have discretion to either issue tickets to individuals for set fine amounts or issue a summons under Part I of the Provincial Offences Act (POA) or to proceed under Part III of the POA by laying an information.

The ministry recognizes that municipalities have been a key partner in the defence against this virus through the coordinated compliance and enforcement activities in an effort to reduce the presence of COVID-19 in our communities. The Ontario government is continuing to help workplaces stay safe and stay open by carrying out COVID-19 safety campaigns. These campaigns are developed in consultation with local public health units, and bylaw enforcement departments, and support Ontario's *Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario*.

The campaigns include visits to workplaces that present heightened risk factors for potential transmission of COVID-19, including restaurants and banquet halls, gyms and fitness centres, personal care services, meeting and event spaces, mall-based retail, cinemas and performing arts centres. We so appreciate the collaboration of our municipal partners closely with provincial enforcement officers and public health officers to coordinate enforcement activities in your communities. If you are interested in having a provincial team support local compliance and enforcement activities in your community, please contact William (BJ) Alvey, Manager and Executive Advisor of Regulatory Compliance Ontario by email at: William.BJ.Alvey@ontario.ca or by phone at 905-572-7648.

Thank you for your support and for joining our shared commitment to work together to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Manson-Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Manson-Smith
Deputy Minister