



## Ontario needs a Stay-at-Home order, community vaccination plans, and paid sick leave for ALL workers to stop spread of COVID-19 variants, reduce the burden on health care

TORONTO – April 6, 2021 – Amid an alarming rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, the Primary Care Collaborative shares concerns expressed by the Ontario Hospital Association, Ontario Medical Association, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and other health care providers that the province needs stronger measures to curb the growing spread of the virus. Ontario’s Science Table has confirmed how dangerous the variants of concerns are, including an increased risks of serious illness and death. As the number of cases and hospitalizations increase daily, it is vitally important that Ontario enforce stricter public health measures and roll out policy initiatives to curb the spread of these deadly variants of the COVID-19 virus.

We implore the government to listen to Ontario’s experts and those front-line health care workers seeing the devastation of COVID-19 in hospitals and communities first-hand.

Instead of an emergency brake, which does little to stop the spread, we need a full stop now to suppress transmission of the virus and preserve the tenuous capacity of our ICUs in hospitals. Now is the time to intensify all efforts and employ an equity-lens to protect those most vulnerable and at risk from the virus. That is the clearest path through the toughest part of this pandemic. To do so, we strongly support and urge the government to take the following vital actions:

1. **Move the province from a shutdown to a stay-at-home order** with people only leaving their homes for medical/health appointments, essential grocery shopping, outdoor exercise and essential work;
2. **Ensure vaccines are reaching those who are most at risk for infection** and who need them the most; we need to prioritize essential workers, those with limited mobility/homebound and others with approaches that will get more vaccines in arms (in their communities, in their workplaces, in their homes); employ community-based, tailored approaches that focus vaccination efforts on communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic;
3. **Prioritize vaccination of teachers, educators and school staff** to ensure we have #SafeSchools – use the upcoming spring break to vaccinate the education sector;
4. **Create a broad education and communications campaign** to address vaccine hesitancy, using culturally sensitive and straight-forward messages to encourage vaccine confidence and directly address myths and misinformation;
5. **Implement paid sick leave for all essential workers now.** This is essential to ensuring businesses that remain open, such as warehouses, retail and others, can remain open safely for all workers while offering curbside pick-up and continuing essential work.

Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and primary care providers continue to educate, collaborate, communicate, vaccinate and support the people we serve. But like their acute and home care colleagues, getting a handle on cases that are out of control in the community is not within their grasp. We need government leadership to support our ongoing work to protect the health of everyone in Ontario, and we need it urgently, because many health care providers are at a breaking point and our health system’s sustainability is at risk. **In order to provide even a glimmer of hope in combatting this wave, we need to employ stricter public health measures now and protect all the**

**citizens of Ontario, especially those most vulnerable.**

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***About the Primary Care Collaborative (PCC):***

We are a coalition of primary care organizations collectively representing 14,000 family doctors, 1,000+ primary care nurse practitioners, 286 primary care teams, 28 Indigenous primary care teams, including northern, rural, and remote teams. This alliance of comprehensive primary care organizations joined together by common purpose to build on the collaborative work during the COVID-19 pandemic as we move towards recovery in a time of health system transformation. The PCC provides a collective and cohesive voice with the purpose of advancing equitable person-centred primary care in Ontario and is focused on influencing policy by creating a unified voice towards resolving barriers or challenges that prevent comprehensive primary care from being the foundation of the health system.