

Ontario Remains Prepared to Administer COVID-19 Vaccines Despite Pfizer Delay

STATEMENT

January 16, 2021

TORONTO — Today, Dr. David Williams, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, issued the following statement in response to the delay in the delivery of the Pfizer-BioNtech COVID-19 vaccine:

“Phase One of Ontario’s vaccine rollout is well underway since launching last December, and we continue to ramp up our capacity to administer more vaccines as quickly and safely as possible. As of January 15, at 8 p.m., we have administered more than 189,000 doses to Ontarians. We are on our way to vaccinating all long-term care homes and all high-risk retirement homes. This includes ensuring that approximately 61,500 residents, staff and essential caregivers, in Toronto, Peel, York and Windsor-Essex receive a COVID-19 vaccination by January 21, 2021.

Yesterday morning, 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. As a result, Pfizer will temporarily reduce deliveries at its European facility to all countries receiving its vaccine, including Canada.

We understand that this change in supply could see deliveries reduced by at least half for Canada in the coming weeks. We are working with the Public Health Agency of Canada to determine the exact timing and amount of these reductions; and we will assess and take appropriate action to ensure we can continue providing our most vulnerable with vaccines. We know the federal government is working to secure more supply and when they are able to deliver more vaccines, we will be ready to administer them.

To respond to this change in supply of the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine, we will be adjusting direction on second doses:

- Long-term care and high-risk retirement home residents and their essential caregivers, who have received their first dose of the Pfizer- BioNtech vaccine, will receive their second dose in 21 to 27 days. Staff who were vaccinated within the homes at the same time as the residents will also follow the same schedule. For individuals who received the Moderna vaccine, the dose schedule of 28 days will remain.
- All other recipients of the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine must receive their second dose after 21 days and before 42 days.

Allocation and scheduling to achieve this will be coordinated by the vaccination site with the support of the Ministry of Health. **If you have received your first dose of the vaccine, you will be contacted by your vaccination site if there are any changes made to the scheduling of your second dose.**

These adjustments align with the recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), who have updated their recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines. NACI has indicated that while efforts should be made to vaccinate according to the recommended schedules, some jurisdictions may maximize the number of individuals benefiting from a first dose of vaccine by delaying the second dose until further supplies of the vaccine become available, preferably within 42 days of receipt of the first dose.

Vaccination of residents, staff and essential caregivers of all long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes in Ontario will continue, with the goal of having the first dose administered in all homes no later than mid-February. In the meantime, we are working to expand the number of vaccination sites to prepare for the demand for vaccination during Phase Two. We continue to be ready to receive and administer the vaccines as soon as we receive them.”

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