

**Date:** February 14, 2021

**Memorandum to:** Medical Officers of Health  
Hospital CEOs

**From:** General (retired) Rick Hillier, Chair of Minister's COVID-19  
Vaccine Distribution Task Force  
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister of Health  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Mario Di Tommaso, Deputy Minister of Community Safety

**Subject: Sequencing of Phase One Priority Populations for Vaccination with Vaccine Supply Resumption**

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Phase One of Ontario's vaccine rollout is well underway. Ontario made adjustments to its vaccination plan in light of the unexpected reduction in supply of vaccines from the federal government. While the province's allocation reduction has had a significant impact on the pace and breadth of vaccine delivery, it has not stopped the vaccination program rollout and it does not change the commitment to vaccinating its highest risk populations and those who care for them.

The provincial target of providing a first dose offer of vaccine to residents of all long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes is arriving at completion. This includes work underway to make vaccinations available to First Nations elder care homes across the province. At this time, we are pleased to report that residents at all long-term care homes across the province have been given an opportunity for their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Given the expected gradual increase in Ontario's vaccine supply, the next target groups within the Phase One priority populations have been identified for vaccination.

The priority sequence set out below is provincial direction for the vaccination program over the coming weeks.

Please schedule vaccinations accordingly, in collaboration with vaccine administration partners, including first doses and second doses within the designated intervals.

To ensure equity and integrity in vaccine delivery, public health units and vaccination clinics should implement processes to fill last-minute cancellations, "no-shows" and end-of-day remaining doses with people who are in groups identified in this memo as immediate and next priority for vaccination, and only to Phase One priority populations.

**Immediate priority for first-dose vaccination:**

- Staff and essential caregivers in long-term care homes, high-risk retirement homes and First Nations elder care homes, and any residents of these settings that have not yet received a first dose of vaccine.
- Alternative level of care patients in hospitals who have a confirmed admission to a long-term care home, retirement home or other congregate care home for seniors.
- Highest Priority health care workers, followed by Very High Priority health care workers, in accordance with the Ministry of Health's guidance on Health Care Worker Prioritization (enclosed).
- Indigenous adults in northern remote and higher risk communities (including on-reserve and urban communities).

**Next priority for first-dose vaccination:**

When all reasonable steps have been taken to complete first-dose vaccinations of all staff, essential caregivers and residents of long-term care homes, high-risk retirement homes and First Nations elder care homes, first-dose vaccinations may be made available to the remainder of the Phase One populations:

- Adults 80 years of age and older.
- Staff, residents and caregivers in retirement homes and other congregate care settings for seniors (e.g., assisted living).
- Health care workers in the High Priority level, and in accordance with the Ministry of Health's guidance on Health Care Worker Prioritization.
- All Indigenous adults.
- Adult recipients of chronic home care.

**Second Dose Intervals:**

To increase the availability of first doses during this supply-limited time, all second dose appointments for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine will be administered 35 days after the administration of the first dose, and no later than 42 days, for all vaccine recipients except for:

- residents of long-term care, high-risk retirement and First Nations elder care homes,
- residents of other types of congregate care homes for seniors, and
- those 80 years of age and older.

The populations described in the above points should receive the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine 21 to 27 days after their first dose.

This direction is in alignment with the memorandum previously issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health regarding the Pfizer-BioNTech dosage interval extension (enclosed).

All second doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine should continue to be provided 28 days after the administration of the first dose, in accordance with the [Ministry of Health guidance](#).

At this time, we ask that you continue to administer all available doses within your allocation, with the exception of those second doses required until the next delivery. Please note that allocations are designated by week and that deliveries do not necessarily occur at the beginning of each week or on a standard day. Local clinic planning should account for this variability. Should your needs change with respect to needed first or second doses, please contact the Ministry of Health (ministry) through the [EOCoperations.moh@ontario.ca](mailto:EOCoperations.moh@ontario.ca).

The ministry is committed to ensuring guidance and information provided is clearly understood by partners regarding the prioritization of populations for COVID-19 vaccines. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

We appreciate your ongoing partnership and dedication to this critical work. We will continue to alert you of any changes to Ontario's situation, during this exciting and rapidly evolving vaccination roll-out.

The ministry will continue to communicate confirmed allocations as soon as they are available.

c:

Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery  
Ronnie Gavsie, Executive Lead, Vaccine Response Distribution, Logistics and Administration  
Dr. Dirk Huyer, Chief Coroner and Lead for Vaccine Clinical Guidance and Surveillance  
Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health