

Grey-Bruce Vaccine Distribution Task Force Community Letter

Being at Our Best, Showing Unity Critical for Grey-Bruce Communities

This week, the Grey-Bruce Vaccine Distribution Task Force met for an update from Dr. Ian Arra and the health unit team on two pressing issues – the spread of COVID-19 and the progress on vaccine distribution. The Task Force is a team of public institutions, community partners, health providers, businesses, Indigenous communities, agricultural sector, and people committed to supporting the implementation of vaccinations in Grey-Bruce.

We are at a critical juncture in the pandemic. Stress, COVID-fatigue, and the many challenges people are faced with as a result of the pandemic are real. Small businesses are suffering, and people are out of work. Our public office holders at all levels are trying their best and our health system is stretched. Times are tough and we need to recognize this.

That's why we are sending this message, endorsed by the Grey-Bruce Vaccine Distribution Task Force. Being at our best and showing unity is how we will end the pandemic. There is a clear plan regarding the distribution of vaccines in Grey-Bruce – it's open and transparent. While there is lots of social media commentary, there are a number of key items we need to all reflect on in a unified manner as a community.

First, supplies are rapidly picking up and to date we have given nearly 50,000 doses of vaccine in Grey-Bruce and they are administered within days of being received. Within months, every resident in Grey-Bruce that's in the prioritization sequence will be able to be vaccinated based on the Provincial Government's ethical framework that works to best allocate vaccines based on the highest risk. To date, a third of adults in Ontario have received their first dose.

Public Health will allocate these vaccines based on these guidelines to meet the needs of Grey-Bruce. We need to show our support and confidence in Public Health to make the right decisions. Public Health only has one goal – protect people and end the pandemic.

Our local primary care and pharmacies are also playing a critical and important role. Based on Provincial arrangements they are safely and effectively administering the AstraZeneca vaccine to anyone over 40. Each participating pharmacy and clinic will have their own waiting list and process for booking vaccinations. Again, demand has outpaced supply locally and all of these providers will do more as supplies arrive.

We can be frustrated that there are many in our community who have not been able to be vaccinated but also recognize there is more demand than supply and officials are doing the best they can given the unprecedented circumstance. These organizations managing the rollout are often faced with changing circumstances given the challenges variants have presented and are making the best decisions they can. We believe being at our best and showing unity is critical at this time. Let's offer forgiveness to one another and demonstrate love, peace, and patience towards one another as we work towards a common goal of a better, healthier tomorrow. It's what Grey-Bruce has done throughout the pandemic, always does in tough times and will do in the days ahead.

Being at our best is also about doing whatever we can to stop the spread of COVID-19, so we have the time for vaccine to arrive and everyone to be vaccinated. We know what these are – distancing, mask wearing and following the rules in place. By focusing on this, we are giving our Health Care system a chance to fight more challenging variants and save people who contract the virus. These steps are also

imperative to ensuring the health unit team can continue to effectively and efficiently complete contact tracing to break the chains of transmission.

Showing unity is a recognition that we have more demand than supply for the vaccine and we will be patient and respectful of the organizations and people that are trying their best to cover everyone as quickly as possible. This is easier said than done given the fatigue and very real consequences from the pandemic, but this is how we will be successful.

This pandemic will end, and the task force is committed to working as hard as we can with Public Health and our institutions to advocate, support and enable as needed until everyone in Grey-Bruce who wants a vaccine can get one. Together we will beat this by being at our best and showing unity.

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