

“The first pillar helps out hospitals maintain capacity through the use of the flu shot,” said Premier Doug Ford at a media conference at Queen’s Park on Tuesday (September 22) along with health minister Christine Elliott. “The flu shot helps reduce visits to our emergency rooms and doctors’ offices during this season, and this will help with keeping capacity in our health care system. That’s why we’re investing \$70 million to deliver the largest and most comprehensive flu shot campaign in Canada’s history.”

The government has ordered 5.1 million flu vaccine doses so far for the entire province, including 1.3 million high-dose vaccine doses for Ontario seniors, especially those with pre-existing health conditions.

“I encourage everyone to get their flu shot this year, it’s absolutely critical,” Ford said. “We need your help. It’s the best way to protect you and your family, because the next few months will be critical. We know that a second wave is coming. We know that it will be more complicated than the first wave. We know it’ll be more challenging on the system. What we don’t know is how bad it will be, how hard we will get, because that’s up to all of us. It starts with everyone getting their flu shot this year.”

Ford and Elliott said other elements of the plan, entitled *Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19*, will be released over the next several days. Along with the influenza vaccination campaign, Elliott said the plan focuses on five other key areas: maintaining strong public health measures, including continued expansion of testing and case and contact management; quickly identifying, managing, and preventing COVID-19 outbreaks; accelerating efforts to reduce health service backlogs; preparing for surges in COVID-19 cases; and recruiting, retaining, training and supporting health care workers, while also continuing to engage families and caregivers.

Today’s 478 new COVID-19 cases is the largest daily increase since May 2, when 511 cases were reported. Most of the cases are in Toronto (153), Peel (95), and Ottawa (90), with smaller increases in York (27), Waterloo (27), Durham (14), Middlesex-London (12), Hamilton (12), Halton (12), Simcoe Muskoka (8), Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (7), and Eastern Ontario (6). The remaining 22 public health units are reporting five or fewer cases. The number of health units reporting no new cases at all has decreased to 11.

The number of hospitalizations has jumped by 17 to 82, the highest number since late July, and the number of cases in Ontario schools has spiked to 51, with 26 student cases, 7 staff cases, and 18 cases among people who are not identified. In licensed child care settings, there are 15 confirmed cases, with 11 child cases and 4 staff cases.

Of today’s cases, 68% are among people under the age of 40. There have been 3 new deaths, all in long term care homes. The backlog of tests under investigation has increased by 7,299 to 39,788.