



NEWS

Health unit and province prepare for arrival of COVID-19 vaccine

Discussions regarding delivery of vaccine begin as province announces creation of a distribution task force and news a vaccine may be ready for use in the new year

By [Catherine Whitnall](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

With Ontario consistently reporting more than one thousand new COVID-19 cases daily, the government's plans to prepare for the delivery of a vaccine in the new year is encouraging news.

On Monday (Nov. 23), the province announced the creation of the Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force, building on the steps it has been taking to prepare for the delivery of a vaccine. The task force will advise the province's development and implementation of an immunization program, including the ethical, timely and effective distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in Ontario.

"Our government continues to take all measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19 while planning for the availability of a safe and effective vaccine once it is ready," stated Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "This task force will help chart a vital path forward in the development of an immunization plan that protects communities and keeps Ontarians safe."

The task force includes members with diverse expertise in operations and logistics, federal-provincial relations, health and clinical domains, public health and immunization, ethics, and information technology and data. The task force will advise on such things as the delivery, storage and distribution of the vaccines, support for health care system partners to deliver a phased vaccination program that initially prioritizes vulnerable populations and follows with mass immunization, clinical guidance on vaccine administration and surveillance of vaccine uptake, and sustained public education and community outreach effort to encourage vaccination.

Researchers worldwide, including the United Kingdom, South Africa, China, India and the United States, are working non-stop to develop a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing the COVID-19 pandemic, that could come to market anywhere from the end of 2020 to the middle of 2021.

Ten vaccines are currently in the third phase of trials. Two US companies, Pfizer and Moderna, recently released details that vaccines tested between 90 and 95 per cent effective. Planning is already underway with federal and provincial partners to prepare for the receipt and rollout of the vaccine.

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“We expect there will be a staggered release [of the vaccine] with essential workers, particularly those in health care, and those at high risk of transmission, a priority,” said Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit medical officer of health Dr. Lynn Noseworthy. “We’ve already been in preliminary discussions . . . and the key sequencing of [vaccination] programming will be determined in the coming months.”

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