

“We expect a very small number of doses to arrive in the coming days,” Premier Doug Ford announced today. “Beginning Tuesday, December 15, these first doses will be administered at University Health Network and The Ottawa Hospital to health care workers who are providing care in long-term care homes and other high-risk settings.”

Ford said Ottawa was selected as the first location to receive the vaccine to test and validate the province’s distribution networks for the vaccine, and also because of the challenges the region has faced with outbreaks in long-term care homes.

At a media briefing at Queen’s Park on Thursday afternoon following Ford’s statement, retired general Rick Hillier stressed the province’s vaccination program “will take a while” to proceed.

“We cannot vaccinate every single person on day one, so people do have to be patient,” said Hillier, who is chair of Ontario’s COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force. “We are going to come at the people who are in most vulnerable circumstances and our health care workers first, and get them vaccinated because the tragedy has been visited upon them most. And then we will work through the rest of the people in this province and the priorities that the government will help us define based on our recommendations back to them.”

With the record increase of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported today, the average number of daily cases over the past seven days has increased by 22 to 1,862.

In the greater Kawarthas region, there are 20 new cases to report and 11 more resolved cases, with the number of active cases increasing by 10 to 106 across the entire region.

Most of the new cases reported today are in Peel (515), Toronto (496), York (208), and Windsor-Essex (112).

There are double-digit increases in Hamilton (75), Waterloo (65), Middlesex-London (61), Ottawa (56), Durham (55), Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (55), Simcoe Muskoka (54), Halton (51), Niagara (35), Eastern Ontario Health Unit (23), Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (17), Southwestern Public Health (17), Thunder Bay (13), Renfrew (11), and Brant County (11), with smaller increases in Leeds, Grenville & Lanark (9), Hastings Prince Edward (6), Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (6), and Grey Bruce (6).

The remaining 11 health units are reporting 5 or fewer new cases, with only 2 health units (both in northern Ontario) reporting no new cases at all.

Of today’s cases, 51% are among people under 40 years of age, with the highest number of cases (693) among people ages 20 to 39 followed by 597 cases among people ages 40 to 59. With 1,804 more cases resolved since yesterday, the percentage of resolved cases has