

(December 21) along with health minister Christine Elliott, education minister Stephen Lecce, Ontario's chief medical officer of health Dr. David Williams, and Dr. Naveed Mohammad, president and chief executive officer of William Osler Health System.

"Our COVID-19 numbers continue accelerating at an alarming rate," Ford said.

"Unfortunately, despite the restrictions, we've seen growing numbers of people travelling between regions in Ontario. COVID is spreading rapidly from high-outbreak areas to areas with fewer cases. As it does, our hospitals are filling up more each day. We've seen a 70 per cent increase in hospitalizations and 80 per cent increase in ICU admissions in the past few weeks."

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"Remember, 75 per cent of our intensive care unit beds at any given time are taken up by people who have had car accidents, or heart attacks, or other emergencies," Ford added.

"Above all, we need to preserve capacity in our ICUs and hospitals, but because of increased cases of COVID-19 filling up our hospitals, we're on the verge of cancelling more elective surgeries — and we already have thousands and thousands of backlogged surgeries."

Ford said he is also "extremely alarmed" by reports of a new strain of COVID-19 that is much more contagious, adding that he will continue to ask the federal government to secure the borders.

"Sixty-three thousand people are going unchecked every week just through Pearson International Airport (in Toronto)," Ford said. "At minimum, we need to test air travellers when they arrive at the airport. This is critical. If they don't do it, we will do it ourselves if needed."

The province-wide shutdown will include the following measures:

- Restricting indoor organized public events and social gatherings, except with members of the same household (the people you live with).
- Prohibiting in-person shopping in most retail settings (although curbside pickup and delivery can continue). Discount and big box retailers selling groceries will be limited to 25 per cent capacity for in-store shopping. Supermarkets, grocery stores and similar stores that primarily sell food, as well as pharmacies, will continue to operate at 50 per cent capacity for in-store shopping.
- Restricting indoor access to shopping malls, with only essential retail stores such as grocery stores and pharmacies permitted to open. Patrons will only be allowed only to go to a designated indoor pickup area (by appointment only) or to outdoor designated pickup areas.