

province have died from COVID-19 infections.

"A year ago today, we were presented with one of the most difficult challenges in our history," said Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Health Christine Elliott in a joint statement issued Jan. 25. "The rapid spread of the virus through the province, the country and around the world would lead the World Health Organization to declare COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020."

Although the pandemic has posed unprecedented health, social, cultural and financial challenges to people around the world, we know so much more about it now that we did on Jan. 25, 2020.

Zahid Butt is a public health researcher at the University of Waterloo who specializes in infectious diseases and global health. Here, he sums up what we know about the virus and where the ongoing research is taking us.

## What we know now

Butt said the first of four major lessons we've learned about COVID-19 is that it affects all segments of society and all ages, though with varying degrees of severity and prevalence.

"It affects marginalized and racialized populations disproportionately, which may be the result of socio-economic disparities and the fact that most of these vulnerable populations work in jobs that make them more likely to contract the virus," he said in an emailed statement.

He also pointed out that some variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, like the U.K. and South African variants, are more transmissible than the original one.

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"Third, mounting scientific evidence suggests that the SARS-Cov-2 virus does have