



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

## COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health  
Public Health and Emergency Services  
December 22, 2020

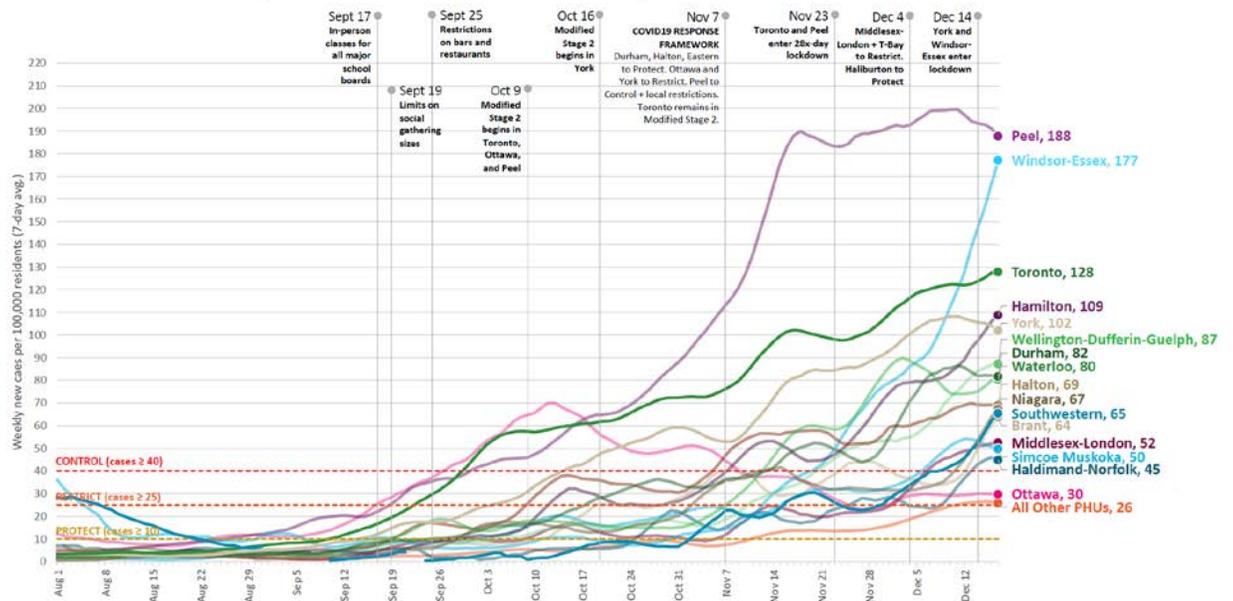
### Highlights

- We continue to see high numbers of new cases every day, with outbreaks in workplaces and congregate care settings being declared daily, and continual hospitalizations, ICU admissions and, sadly, deaths.
- Our incidence rate is starting to approach those of health units who have already entered lockdown.
- **We cannot wait until the Province-wide Lockdown begins to reduce our social interactions.**
- If we continue socializing at the same rate as we have to date, our situation will become worse before we enter the Province-wide Lockdown.
  - In which case, it will become even more difficult to bring our case rates down, and
  - Four weeks may not be enough to slow the spread of COVID to exit lockdown.

### Overall trends

- We continue to see high numbers of new cases every day, with outbreaks in workplaces and congregate care settings being declared daily, and continual hospitalizations, ICU admissions and, sadly, deaths.
- This is not unlike the situation in several medium to large areas of southern Ontario:

## Total new cases per 100,000 residents per week across PHUs



Data source: Case and Contact Management System, data up to December 17

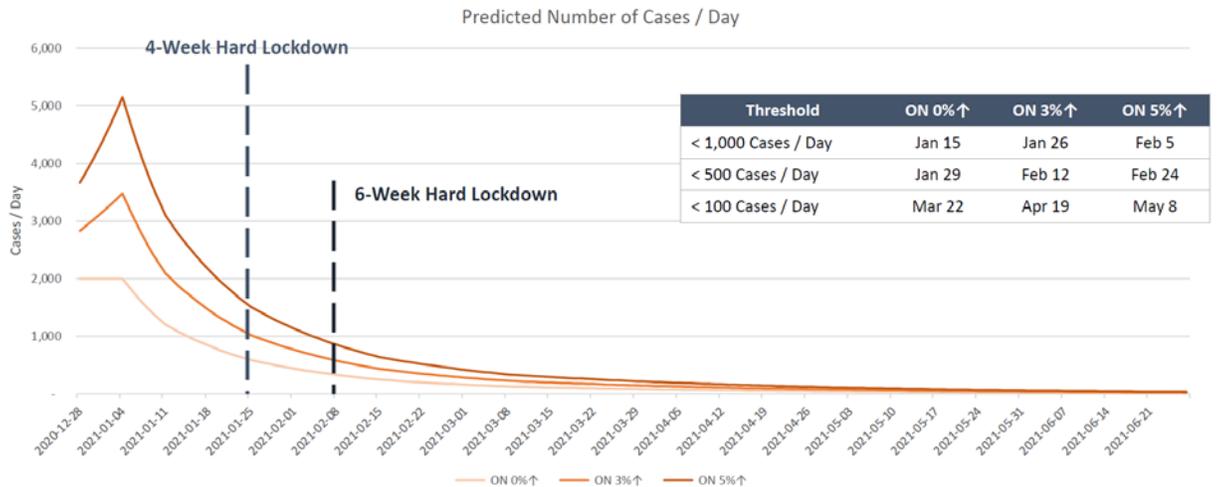
Graph from the Update on COVID-19 Projections, from the Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables, December 19, 2020.

- Our incidence rate has started to climb again
  - It is now at 96 cases per 100,000 per week, the highest it has been to date.
  - It is starting to approach those areas which have already entered lockdown.
    - Five areas in Ontario have already entered lockdown
    - Our incidence rate is currently 7<sup>th</sup> highest in Ontario. (This fluctuates; recently, we have fluctuated in the range between 6-10<sup>th</sup> in Ontario)
  - Our current per cent positivity (taking into account interim data) has increased to 3.9 per cent.
  - Our reproductive rate is currently at 1.1.
- Therefore, there is widespread transmission of COVID-19 in Waterloo Region, and it has started spreading faster again.

## We Need to Act Now

- We are headed in the wrong direction, and **we cannot wait until the Province-wide Lockdown begins to reduce our social interactions.**
- We must **avoid social gatherings, under all circumstances**, including holiday celebrations, workplace end of year celebrations, play dates, birthday parties, dinner parties—even with close family, friends or people you trust.

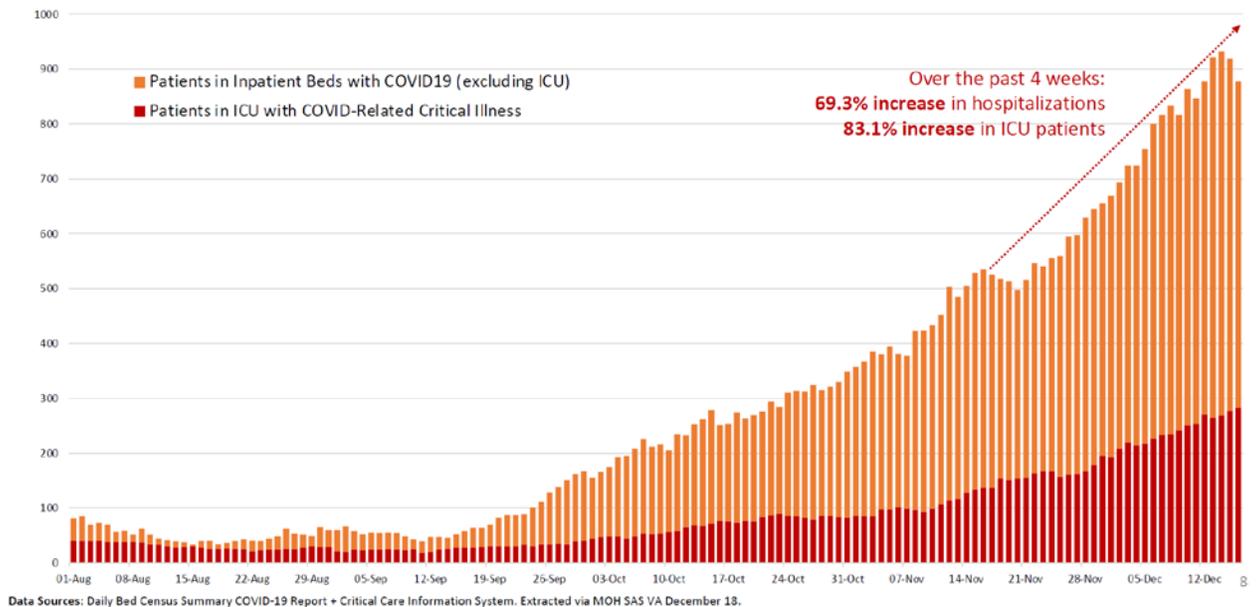
# ON Predictions: The effect of lockdowns varies with the starting case numbers and length of lockdown



Graph from the Update on COVID-19 Projections, from the Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables, December 19, 2020.

- The graph above shows that, even after we enter the Province-wide Lockdown, our numbers are expected to still grow initially.
- **If we continue socializing** at the same rate as we have to date, **our situation will become worse before we enter the Province-wide Lockdown.**
  - **In which case, it will become even more difficult for us to bring our case rates down.**
  - **And four weeks may not be enough to slow the spread of COVID enough to exit Lockdown.**
- If we socialize and gather **even more** before Lockdown, thinking it's okay for a "last hurrah" because we're going into lockdown anyways, we will make it **even worse** for ourselves.
  - We will pay for it **even more** later.
- According to the latest provincial modeling released yesterday, in any scenario, even with no growth in case rates, Ontario's ICU capacity will be exceeded by the end of the month. (See graph below.)

## COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions continue to climb



Graph from the Update on COVID-19 Projections, from the Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables, December 19, 2020.

- This is very serious situation.
  - As expressed by our hospital leaders, our local health care system is already at the tipping point.
  - COVID-19 is widespread in Waterloo Region and the speed at which it is spreading is increasing again.
- **We cannot wait another day to:**
  - **No longer socially gather with others.**
  - **Only go out for essential purposes.**
- Thank-you to the many of you who are doing all that they can to keep their social interactions to a minimum.
- We need to all pull together, and do everything we can to help slow the spread.
- Thank-you.