

# Canadian Medical Association urges national action to curb third wave of COVID-19

April 19 2021

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is calling for a national emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis unfolding in Ontario and other provinces.

"We are at a critical juncture where a true national approach to combatting COVID-19 will make the difference between more or less

lives saved," said CMA President Dr. Ann Collins. "This country must come together to help support provinces most severely impacted."

On April 15, the number of new infections in Canada surged past 9,500, setting a new single-day record. Nearly half of those cases came from Ontario, which reported a record 4,736 new infections. The [province](#) recently predicted that number could escalate to more than 30,000 a day by May.

More transmissible variants of SARS-CoV-2 make up a large proportion of the new cases in several provinces and appear to be driving up hospitalizations. Ontario alone accounts for nearly 2,000 of 3,691 COVID-19 hospitalizations across Canada. According to provincial officials, the situation is becoming "dire."

The CMA is calling for "extraordinary" measures to bring the crisis under control, including "marshaling national resources where needed, applying restrictive public health measures, and prioritizing national collaboration to save the most lives."

According to a statement, "this means sharing healthcare resources across provincial and territorial borders to help jurisdictions that are currently at crisis levels in ICUs and where healthcare capacity is overwhelmed." Better public health communication and enhanced paid sick leave are also "urgently required."

"We act as one country when crisis hits with wildfires, floods and other tragedies," said Collins. "We must do everything needed to avoid making unbearable choices as to who lives if resources are not available."

The CMA is also urging the federal government to refocus vaccine distribution on the areas hit hardest by COVID-19, rather than divvying up doses between the provinces and territories based on population.

"If we can't achieve this through voluntary cooperation, then stronger measures might be needed," Collins said.

According to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, any changes in the distribution of vaccines would have to be negotiated with the provinces. "We're happy to continue to work with the provinces on adjusting as the provinces see necessary," he said.

So far, few provinces seem keen to cooperate. Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin dismissed the CMA's call for a redistribution of vaccines, arguing that "things can change very quickly."

"We've done the work, we've sacrificed and followed restrictions," he said. "There are still variants of concern across the country."

Ontario's government has [reached out to every province and territory](#) asking them to send nurses, respiratory therapists, perfusionists and anesthesia assistants to cover staffing shortfalls. The province is offering to pay [health workers](#) "temporary relocation expenses" and said length-of-stay would depend on Ontario's COVID-19 caseload and intensive care capacity.

While Newfoundland Premier Andrew Furey indicated that his province would be willing to pitch in, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney denied the request, stating "we are simply not in a position to send our healthcare workers."

Some health workers have also expressed skepticism about the practicality of sharing human resources across Canada. According to Dr. Christopher Labos, a Montreal-based epidemiologist, "logistically, you can't move people around the country like pieces on a chessboard."

Meanwhile, Ontario has rejected an offer from the [federal government](#)

to send mobile vaccination teams to Toronto and Hamilton without increasing the province's share of vaccines. According to Premier Doug Ford's office, when it comes to vaccination, "we do not have a capacity issue, we have a supply issue."

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Canadian Medical Association urges national action to curb third wave of COVID-19 (2021, April 19) retrieved 21 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-canadian-medical-association-urges-national.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.