

Quebec orders shops, bars, restaurants to operate at 50%

December 17 2021



People wear face masks during the coronavirus pandemic as they walk along Ste-Catherine Street in Montreal, Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021. Credit: Graham Hughes/The Canadian Press via AP

Bars, restaurants, stores and entertainment venues across the Canadian province of Quebec will be required to operate at 50% capacity beginning Monday because of a surge in coronavirus cases from the new omicron variant.

The rule was were announced Thursday by Quebec Premier François Legault as part of a series of new pandemic restrictions after forecasts that hospitals in the province could reach capacity for COVID-19 patients within weeks.

Quebec reported 2,736 new coronavirus cases for the previous 24 hours—the highest daily number since Jan. 8. Legault said health officials expect to announce 3,700 new infections Friday.

In addition to capping capacity for retail establishments, Quebec is requiring churches and other faith venues to also keep to half capacity. Worshippers will be required to show proof of vaccination to enter.

Workplace parties are now banned as are dancing and singing karaoke inside bars, clubs and restaurants. The premier also reversed a decision to allow bigger indoor private gatherings ahead of Christmas, keeping the maximum at 10 people instead of raising it to 20 on Dec. 23.

Legault refused to rule out reinstating a curfew. Quebec had a curfew from January to May.

The Montreal Canadiens announced that their National Hockey League game against the Philadelphia Flyers would be played without fans following a request from Quebec [health officials](#).



People enter a COVID-19 rapid testing business in Montreal, Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021. Credit: Graham Hughes/The Canadian Press via AP

In Ontario, meanwhile, a group of experts advising that province on the pandemic released new data that they say shows public health measures must cut contacts in half if the [province](#) is to avoid having 10,000 daily virus cases in the [holiday season](#).

"This will likely be the hardest wave of the pandemic," said Dr. Adalsteinn Brown. "If we want to blunt this wave—please note that I say blunt it, not flatten—we will need to reduce contacts between people."

Ontario reported 2,421 new virus infections—its highest since mid-May. It also recorded nine more COVID-19 deaths, pushing Canada past 30,000 deaths since the [pandemic](#) began.

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