

December 9, 2021

To: Individuals and Workplaces in Huron County, Perth County, St Marys, Stratford, Middlesex County, the City of London, Oxford County, Elgin County, and the City of St. Thomas

RE: **Letter of Recommendation**

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Cases of COVID-19 are rising across the Province and across the communities served by Huron Perth Public Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit, and Southwestern Public Health. This rise in cases coincides with the recent identification of the Omicron variant of concern in the region, as well as the upcoming holiday season and the anticipated high number of private social gatherings.

Ontario's Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables asserted on December 7, that COVID-19 cases are rising in most Public Health Units due to the Delta variant. Positivity is also rising. To control cases and the impact on our health care system, we need to increase vaccination and **continue to use public health measures to reduce transmission now.**

Even without Omicron, cases are expected to rise steadily, and ICU occupancy will subsequently increase. In South Africa, where the Omicron variant was first identified, there has been a rapid increase in daily cases, as well as hospital and ICU admissions.

It is time to reduce opportunities for transmission before our health care system is overwhelmed. This Letter provides strong recommendations that apply to every resident within the communities we serve. The particular focus is on private social gatherings in indoor environments. Experience, and Science Table modeling, have shown that decreasing the number of contacts predicts a decrease in case counts.

December is peak social gathering time in the region. Most households plan more than one multi-family gathering during the last two weeks of December.

While cases of COVID-19 do occur in people who are vaccinated, the illness experienced is shorter in duration and much less severe. Unvaccinated individuals are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, and at a higher risk of experiencing severe health outcomes when they do become infected. The Delta variant, which is the dominant variant in Ontario, spreads quickly and easily, and will find those most susceptible. By reducing their number of close contacts, we can prevent serious illness and hospitalization in those who are most vulnerable to infection.

Finally, when we are not socializing, we are at work. High rates of vaccination are not universal within local workplaces and employees are at risk whenever they work in close contact with others. There have been more than 200 outbreaks across Southwestern Ontario over the past week; every sector has been affected.

Therefore, we strongly recommend:

1. Everyone should limit indoor social gatherings in private dwellings to no more than 10 people. All attendees 12 years of age and older should be vaccinated.
2. All unvaccinated individuals 12 years of age and older should avoid any non-essential indoor contact with individuals who are not part of their household.
3. Where possible, individuals should work remotely.

*These recommendations are effective immediately and will be reassessed in four weeks' time.*

The COVID-19 vaccines provide a high level of protection against serious illness, hospitalization, and death. According to the Ontario Science Table's [Fourth Wave dashboard](#), full-vaccination is associated with a 79.1% reduction in COVID-19 infection, a 92.9% reduction in hospital admission, and a 96.6% reduction in ICU admission. However, vaccines cannot do this work alone. A layered approach to applying public health measures is required.

This Letter of Recommendation is applicable to every resident in our communities; everyone has a role to play in reducing virus transmission and keeping themselves, their families, and their communities safer during what we hope will still be a joyful time of year.

Sincerely,



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