

COVID-19 updates for the week of April 11

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According to Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam's April 11 statement on COVID-19 in Canada, she says that with the concerning rise in virus cases seen recently, people should be cautious and maintain public health measures and individual precautions where they're warranted and use common sense in each situation. A seven-day average of 6,873 new cases daily from the latest national level data from April 2 to 8. There was an average of 115,654 tests completed daily across the country for the week of March 28 to April 3, of which 5.1 per cent were positive for COVID-19, an increase from 4.3 per cent the week before. Tam says that sustained high infection rates are also impacting COVID-19 severity indicators, which are levelling off or increasing, especially in places with higher virus activity. This rise is placing renewed strain on the health care system and health care workers. Provincial and territorial data indicate that an average of 2,560 people with COVID-19 were being treated in hospitals each day during the last seven-day period (April 2 to 8), representing a seven per cent increase over last week. This includes 860 cases being treated in the ICUs, which is 23 per cent higher than last week. Thirty COVID-19 related deaths were reported daily during this same period. In Ontario, as of April 8, there were 4,224 new cases reported. There were 1,126 hospitalizations, an increase of 52 cases from the day before. ICU cases were reported at 159 cases, down nine people from the day before. There were 12,527 deaths reported this week since the beginning of the pandemic, an increase of 57 cases since last week. In Hastings Prince Edward, as of April 11, there were 148 new high-risk cases and active high-risk cases amounted to 469 people. There were 18 outbreaks in high-risk settings like LTC homes, and there were 50 deaths reported. There are 21 people who are currently hospitalized at Quinte Health Care hospitals and four people in the ICU. Health Canada confirms at least six cases of COVID-19 XE in Canada. Health Canada confirmed at least six cases of the XE recombinant of the Omicron variant in Canada as of April 6. This XE recombinant is a recombination of the BA.1 and BA.2 subvariants of Omicron. According to Health Canada, a recombinant virus is a combination of genetic material from two or more different viruses. In this case, the original variant of Omicron (BA.1) and the more infectious stealth Omicron (BA.2). First detected in the U.K. in mid-January, with hundreds of cases arising since then, it has also been reported in China and Thailand. The World Health Organization said that the variant is believed to be 10 per cent more transmissible than the BA.2 variant. While recombinant viruses are fairly common and they tend to die off quickly, scientists from the Public Health Agency of Canada and their national and international counterparts, are continuing to monitor this recombinant sub-lineage of the virus to obtain more information about its severity and transmissibility levels. Amid sixth wave of COVID-19, school absences concerning Ontario experiences a sixth wave of COVID-19, and the provinces are continuing their efforts to get people to live with COVID-19 while rescinding public health measures, absences in some of the province's schools are raising concerns amongst teachers and staff. Schools in Waterloo, Ottawa and London have all recently noted absences among students and teachers, with one school in Kitchener having 13 staff absences in one day, and two schools having to close and revert to online learning due to staff shortages. Teachers and staff are concerned for all students but particularly those in special education streams, who need more individual and specialized attention. According to CTV news, last week 36 schools in Ottawa reported at least 20 per cent of staff and students absent (including reasons not related to COVID-19), and in some cases, some schools reported absences of 30 per cent and over. According to Dr. Peter Juni, the head of Ontario's Science Table, wastewater collection data has recorded much higher case levels of the virus. These levels have not been seen since the beginning of the pandemic; an estimated 100,000 new virus infections per day. Juni estimates with this wastewater data, that five per cent of Ontario's population has an active case of COVID-19. Due to this increase, health care professionals like Dr. Isaac Bogoch and Dr. Theresa Tam advise people to use caution and common sense and suggest they continue to wear masks, keep physical distance (six feet) and practice good hand hygiene through this sixth wave, even though health measures like mask usage have been lifted across most of the country. Quebec and P.E.I. have extended their mask mandates until the end of April.