

## Province releases pandemic projections

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By Nate Smelle

By the time Bancroft This Week went to press on Tuesday afternoon, Canada was reporting 17,840 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 344 deaths nationwide. With 9,340 confirmed cases, Quebec is currently harbouring the largest number of infections, however, Ontario is now registering the highest death toll at 177. At the same time, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health Unit was reporting 20 lab-confirmed cases, and 278 probable cases throughout the two counties. South of the border, the situation has continued to worsen with the United States now tallying 386,800 confirmed cases, and 12,285 deaths. Globally, the numbers have also continued to rise over the past week, with the number of confirmed cases jumping from 838,061 to 1,412,103; and the number of deaths climbing from 41,261 to 81,103. On Friday, April 3 the government of Ontario released a series of projections which defined a range of possible scenarios and the impact they could have on the people of Ontario. Releasing the information during a press conference, president and CEO of Public Health Ontario Dr. Peter Donnelly, CEO and president of Ontario Health Mathew Anderson and Dean of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health Aldalsteinn Brown took turns explaining the data and what it means for Ontarians. Provincially, the data showed that COVID-19 has the potential to kill anywhere from 3,000 to 15,000 people in Ontario during the lifespan of the pandemic, which could last up to two years. During the press conference Dr. Donnelly indicated that if no action had been taken Ontario could have seen as many as 6,000 deaths by the end of April, and 100,000 deaths over the course of the pandemic. With the current measures in place, the projections anticipated 1,600 deaths by April 30. Providing a glimmer of hope, the data also revealed that if further intervention occurs and additional measures to protect the health and safety of the public are taken, the provincial death toll at the end of the month could be as low as 200 people. Following the release of the data, Premier Doug Ford reminded Ontarians that how these scenarios play out will depend largely on the public's willingness to actively prevent the spread of COVID-19. Noting that the 'early chapters' in the story of Ontario's response to the pandemic had already been written, he said 'the ending of our story is still up to us. If we work together, we can write the last chapter of our story, because these forecasts are projections and they can change with your actions, and with the government's actions. We have seen today that we can lower these numbers, we can slow the spread, and flatten the curve. But, as it stands, by the end of this month we could see as many as 80,000 people in Ontario inflicted with this terrible virus. Over 1,600 people could be dead by the end of April - that's 50 a day, or that's two people every hour. Each one could be your brother, your sister, your mother, your father, your grandparents, or a friend.' Stepping up its efforts, the provincial government also announced they had reduced the list of businesses classified as 'essential' and therefore ordering more workplaces to close. Starting at 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, April 4 this closure will be in place for at least 14 days. The government advises business-owners with questions concerning their essential business status to call the 'Stop the Spread' hotline at 1-888-444-3659. The hotline is available from 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.