

**City of Burlington
Public Engagement TownHall
Covid 19 Update & Vaccine
Rollout Discussion**

TownHall Transcript

Wednesday, April 28, 2021



Moderator Erik:
00:00

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the City of Burlington's telephone TownHall meeting. We are live this evening with your Mayor, Marianne Meed Ward. In addition, we are joined by thousands of residents from across the city listening in. To ask a question live this evening, simply press three on your phone's keypad. Once again, press three to ask a live question at any time. My name is Erik, and I'm the moderator from the TownHall this evening. During this live telephone TownHall, we encourage you to get involved and to ask questions. The Mayor, along with a panel of local leaders, are on the line to help answer your question. They have made it a priority to engage and connect with you and fellow residents with important updates on how the City of Burlington is moving forward and navigating the third wave of COVID-19 cases the province is experiencing, while providing information on the vaccine rollout. Our intention is to get as many questions from you as possible. You can ask a live question at any time by pressing three on your phone's keypad. Someone will take your name and place you in the question queue. Now, we're still having new people join us. And I want to welcome everyone to the City of Burlington's telephone TownHall meeting. We are live this evening with your Mayor, Marianne Meed Ward. In addition, we are joined by thousands of residents from across the city listening in. Again, we do want to remind everyone joining us that you have a chance to ask a live question at any time by pressing three on your phone's keypad. Someone will take your name and place you in the question queue. At this time, I'm going to introduce Mayor Meed Ward so she can open up the TownHall. Marianne Meed Ward, please go ahead.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
01:29

Thank you so much, moderator, and good evening, Burlington. I really appreciate you and thank you for joining our public COVID-19 telephone TownHall tonight. I'm your host, Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and joining me today are a group of outstanding panelists, as always. So, I'll introduce who we've got here on the line, the Honourable Karina Gould, our MP for Burlington. Our MPP Jane McKenna for Burlington, and MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos are both on house duty tonight. But we do have Ken Audziss here from MPP McKenna's office to answer any provincial questions you might have. Eric Vandewall, the President and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital, is here. Doctor Dale Kalina, Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at Joseph Brant Hospital. Tim Commisso, the City Manager for Burlington. Allan Magi, our Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services. And Chris Glenn, our Director of Recreation Services. There are members of City Council and many city staff also listening in on the line to hear your questions and your comments.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
02:34

Well, we are in the third wave of this pandemic now and another lockdown, which I know we all hope will be our last. Despite rising COVID-19 case numbers across the province, which have been putting extraordinary pressures on our hospitals and our ICUs, over 30% of Ontarians, and in Halton, over 30% as well of residents have

received at least one vaccine shot, and more vaccines are on the way. I am so proud of our community, and I just want to take an opportunity to say thank you to all of you for doing so many of the right things to keep yourself, and our community, and your family, and your friends safe, wearing masks, staying home, and possible maintaining physical distancing when outside, even when you're outside, if you're in close proximity, and only getting together at the moment with members of your own household. I know the sacrifices that many of you have and are continuing to make and I want to thank you for your diligence. We know that things are changing, sometimes on a daily basis, and there's a lot of information for our community to absorb and stay on top of. So that's why we host these TownHalls. And it's an opportunity to give you a chance to ask your questions here, what's on your mind, and provide some feedback for us here at the city.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
03:56

So, let's get started so we can get to as many questions as possible. Once a question has been asked, I will direct it to the appropriate person on our panel. And if we don't have the right person on the line tonight or an ability to answer your question, we will take it away and post the answer, along with a full recap and recording of tonight's TownHall on the city website. So, if you have friends who've missed it or you want to listen in again, that will be available to you. And just before we get started, a final reminder of tonight's guidelines for participation in the TownHall. Please focus your questions tonight on COVID-related questions. Use productive language, be respectful of others, and help us to ensure that this is a positive and helpful experience for everyone on the line. I know that you will do that. Any callers who don't will be muted and we'll move on to another question. But I know we're not going to have to do that tonight. So, our goal this evening is to help you, all of the people in our community, with timely and accurate information as we all continue to respond and move our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. So, thank you again, so much, for joining us. And I will turn it over to our moderator now for the first question.

Moderator Erik:
05:13

Well, thank you, Mayor Meed Ward. We do have our first live question coming up. But quickly, we're going to do a survey question. For everyone joining us, you can use your touchtone phone to indicate your response on this question. We want to know, have you either had the COVID-19 vaccination, or are planning on being vaccinated when it's available to you? If yes, press one. If no, press two. If you are still unsure, press three. So again, have you either had or-- sorry, have you either had the COVID-19 vaccination, or are planning on being vaccinated when it's available to you? If yes, press one. If no, press two. If you are still unsure, press three. Our first live question we have is Joan, who's joining us live now. Joan, welcome. Please go ahead.

Joan: 06:03

Thank you. I'm just trying to get some information on registering for a vaccine. I don't have a computer. Don't know where to call.

- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 06:14
Okay, well, thank you. You have come to the right place. I can answer that one for you, so you can call 311, which is Halton Region. And anyone without a computer, they can walk you through what you need to do to get signed up, they can help you. And if you need a ride, they are also providing free rides. I'll pause there just for a moment to see if there's anyone else, maybe Eric or Dale on the line who wants to contribute anything to that.
- Dr. Kalina: 06:44
No, just to say that, that's exactly where I would go, and they would be more than happy to help you get your vaccines on.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 06:53
That's great, thank you very much, Dr. Kalina. And Joan, if you do have any issues, you can reach out to my office, 905-335-7600, and they'll connect you, and we'll make sure that you get the information that you need, and anyone else who's listening and who doesn't have a computer that needs some assistance. But again, 311 is the place to call. Next question, moderator.
- Moderator Erik: 07:17
Up next, we have another live question. Again, a quick reminder for everyone joining us, press three on your phone's keypad if you'd like to ask a live question in the TownHall this evening. Up next, we have Jack, who's joining us now. Jack, welcome. Please go ahead.
- Jack: 07:33
Thank you. And thank you for doing the TownHall again, Mayor, greatly appreciate it. I'm 56 years old and live in Burlington. I have yet to be vaccinated. And I'm hoping, ideally, to get the Pfizer shot, and wondering when Pfizer vaccines will be available here in Burlington.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 07:56
Thank you for that question, Jack. And I'm going to take it kind of in a two-parter around-- I'm going to ask Dr. Kalina to talk about the vaccines and the safety of the vaccines for everyone. I'm sure that's a question on people's minds. But in terms of the next shipments, everything depends on supply. I can tell you-- I can tell you that. So, we are getting vaccines in arms here in Burlington and Halton as soon as they come in, and as more vaccines come in, then the ages can keep coming down so more and more people are eligible. So, it's really hard to say what the timeline is going to be as it all depends on supply. But I will say that the best vaccine to take is the one that is available to you. And of course, anyone over 40 now can get the AstraZeneca at their pharmacies. So, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Kalina to talk about the vaccines, and perhaps assure folks about the safety of all of them. Go ahead, doctor.
- Dr. Kalina: 09:03
Thanks, Mayor Meed Ward and thanks, Jack, for your question. So here in Halton Region, we have six clinics that are using a combination of the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccine. And we've got over 70, 7-0 clinics, or sorry, pharmacies that are using the AstraZeneca vaccine. But to echo what Mayor Meed Ward said, the best vaccine really is the one that is in your arm. And the unfortunate truth is that we have, and I have seen individuals who have delayed getting their first dose of a vaccine waiting for a specific type of vaccine, a specific brand, and have unfortunately got

COVID, especially given how transmissible it is, especially with the number of cases that we've got through this third wave. So, I really can't stress enough how important it is to get any vaccine first, the first one that's available to you. And for you, Jack, that would be the AstraZeneca vaccine. And I can tell you that I have advised my family members that are in that category to get the AstraZeneca vaccine. I've encouraged everybody that I know to get the first dose that is available to them. And the reality is all four of the vaccines that are available in Canada and in Halton region do the one thing that I want most 100% of the time, and that's prevents people from dying, and preventing people from having to come into the hospital and seeing people like me, because all four of the vaccines prevent severe disease 100% of the time. The last thing I'll say is there's a lot of really great information about vaccines at COVID-Vaccine.Canada.ca and also on Halton.ca.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
10:53

Thank you so much for that, doctor. And I know I've heard from folks who are signed up at one of those 70 pharmacies. I'm on a wait list, and I know a number of folks I've heard from are. And we'll all just have to be patient as we wait. Again, it depends on supply, and don't give up. It's great to see folks really keen to be able to get whatever vaccine is available to them in their category. Next question, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
11:23

We have another live question coming up now, and it's going to be from Abbas who is joining us live now. Abbas, welcome. Please go ahead.

Abbas: 11:30

Yes, first of all, I'm so happy that, Mayor, having these-- our beloved Mayor having these interactions, this is wonderful. My question is, if I have had my first vaccine Pfizer, I should wait for the second one also Pfizer or any other vaccine?

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
12:04

That is an excellent question. And thank you so much, Abbas, for joining and for being so kind. I really appreciate that. So that is a Dr. Kalina question for sure. Over to you, doctor.

Dr. Kalina:
12:17

It sure is. Thanks, Mayor. Thanks, Abbas, for your question. So right now, the best information that we have and the best evidence that we have is to get the second dose of a two-dose vaccine with the same one. So, if you got your first dose with Pfizer, get your second dose of Pfizer. If your first dose was AstraZeneca, get your second dose of AstraZeneca. Sometime in the future, we might see a role for kind of mixing and matching different vaccines. But for right now, get the one that you've been booked for, which will be the same one that you got the first time. Back to you, Mayor.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
12:52

Thank you so much. And over to you, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
12:55

Up next, we have another live question. Again, another quick reminder to everyone joining us, press three on your phone's keypad if you'd like to ask a live question on the TownHall this evening.

- We're going now to Sherry for a live question. Sherry, welcome. Please go ahead.
- Sherry: 13:10
Hi, I was just wondering when the cases are counted for Halton Region, are they counted as people that live in Halton region, or in the instance of Brampton where I hear there's quite an outbreak happening. Are those cases being counted in Halton Region even if the people live in Hamilton or wherever?
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 13:31
Another great question. I will ask Dr. Kalina to answer that one as well as you work closely with the public health unit - I know you and Eric both do - that collects the data. Can you answer that one?
- Dr. Kalina: 13:46
I sure can. Thanks, Sherry. So, the case counts are done based on where somebody lives. So, if you got the-- if you got the virus, say, in Toronto, for instance, at your workplace, but you live in Halton region, it would count as a case in Halton region. Now, that contrasts to counts of the deceased. So, anybody who dies within Halton Region, however, is counted as a death within Halton Region, regardless of where they reside. So, the case count that you see on Halton.ca are representative of that.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 14:26
Thanks for that, and just a follow-up for me, which may be on folks' minds as well in terms of the counting. On Halton, they do record outbreaks by workplace, school, other items. So, if there's a workplace, so Sherry mentioned Fearman, there's a workplace outbreak there. That would be recorded on the Halton.ca website as a workplace outbreak. But the actual numbers wouldn't be recorded here unless they live here, is that correct?
- Dr. Kalina: 14:53
Yes, so the outbreaks are recorded on Halton.ca, although workplaces aren't specifically named, schools and congregate settings are specifically named on the Halton.ca website. But you're very right to say that any case will be attributed to where the person resides.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 15:13
Great, very helpful. Over to you, moderator, for our next question.
- Moderator Erik: 15:17
We have another live question coming up now from Edward, who's joining us. Edward, welcome. Please go ahead.
- Edward: 15:24
Thank you, Madam Mayor, for once again putting on another TownHall. These are very useful and informative. Simple question, perhaps, is what is the most reliable way under the COVID lockdown scenario situations to, basically, call in what is becoming blatant infractions to restriction rules or restriction protocols? On two scenarios, back in December and currently, I've witnessed things which just my patience and tolerance can't accept any longer. And I'm tempted to just call in on a hotline that I found on websites. But even today, I called something in and was hung up on through-- I think it was transferred to whether it was the Ontario Provincial Police or Halton Region Police. But that just doesn't seem to be a

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
16:19

reliable way to help enforce COVID restrictions or COVID rules.

Thank you so much for that question, Edward. I can take that one. We do have a-- we call it our triage system for dealing with concerns around violations. And there is a phone number, a COVID hotline that is at Halton Regional Police Service. The phone number is 905-825-4722. And the police will then determine whether it's a Milton, Halton Hills, Oakville, or Burlington matter. And assuming it's Burlington, they would dispatch to Burlington bylaw, and then bylaw would go out from there. So, I'm sorry to hear about the experience that you had, and that the call seemed to be dropped. But certainly, you can reach out through that COVID hotline. We do have an intake for bylaw infractions in general, and that email is Building@Burlington.ca. So, either of those will get you someone to respond. And our approach at the city is an education one first and try to let folks know what the rules are, especially given how often they do change, and hopefully, get compliance. And if that occurs, then they move along. If there are issues, and only under extreme circumstances, would a ticket be issued. I hope that helps. And next question, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
17:57

Up next, we have another live question. But quickly, we're going to do our second survey question of the evening and we want to hear from you. You can use your touchtone phone to indicate your response. Once the City of Burlington resumes in-person public meetings, how likely are you to attend in-person public meetings? If you are very likely, press one. If you are somewhat likely, press two. And if you are not at all likely, press three. So, again, once the City of Burlington resumes in-person public meetings, how likely are you to attend in-person public meetings? If you are very likely, press one. If you are somewhat likely, press two. And if you are not at all likely, press three. Up next, we have a live question from Rose, who's joining us now. Rose, welcome. Please go ahead.

Rose: 18:43

Thank you. My question is probably for Dr. Kalina. I'm wondering, how soon would I test positive if I was infected? And I'm sort of thinking somebody passes by me on the street or wherever, and they're infected. And if I were going to get it, how soon would the tests show that I got it?

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
19:09

Great question. I'm sure a lot of folks on this call will be interested in the answer. Over to you, doctor.

Dr. Kalina:
19:15

Thanks. And thanks, Rose. So, if you've been exposed to COVID, the most likely time that you will have-- that you will test positive and start to become symptomatic is around five to seven days afterwards, recognizing that the maximum length of time, which is the incubation period that you can become infectious afterwards, is still about two weeks. And that's frankly, what causes some of the difficulty with contact tracing, things like that. But the length of time between actual exposure and infection, and disease and test

positivity, usually, is around five to seven days.

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 19:59
Great. Thank you for that. I'm actually going to step back just to that previous question for a moment about how to report, or call in, or get some resolution on violations, especially if they happen in the workplace. I want to turn it over to Ken Audziss, who is an MPP at Jane McKenna's office. Ken, over to you.

Ken Audziss: 20:21
Thank you, Mayor. We do get a lot of questions from workers who are concerned about things that may be happening in their workplace, and obviously, they're also concerned about being able to report any activity in their workplace without having to identify themselves. The Ministry of Labour, Training, Skills Development does have a health and safety contact centre, and you can make a report any time of the day anonymously. And the phone number is 1-877-202-0008.

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 20:59
Thank you for that. And just for folks who may be joining the call, just to remind you who we've got here, if you have a question for our federal-- a federal question, we do have Honourable Karina Gould for Burlington on the line. We have Ken from Jane McKenna's office on the line if you have provincial questions. We have Eric Vandewall, President and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital. Of course, Dr. Dale Kalina, the Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at Joseph Brant Hospital. Tim Commisso, our City Manager, Allan Magi, our Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Community Service. And if you have any questions about recreation services, we have Chris Glenn on the line. Back to you, moderator, for our next question.

Moderator Erik: 21:41
Thank you, Mayor Meed Ward. We have another live question now. It's Alex, who's joining us live. Alex, welcome. Please go ahead.

Alex: 21:49
Good evening. My wife and I were vaccinated in April. And we were told 16 weeks for the second vaccination. Recently, we were told three weeks, and then it was bumped to actually the same day to 16 weeks. I have heard that 6 weeks may be too long of a gap, and that you may have to have a third vaccination. I also would like to know what if this vaccination is going to be-- you think it's going to be an annual event. And could the 16 weeks be bumped even further?

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 22:38
That's a great question. I hear that one regularly. So, I'm going to turn it to Dr. Kalina to speak to that. And then I'll also ask our Member of Parliament, Karina Gould to weigh in as the federal government is responsible for the supply of the vaccine for any further comment. So, Dr. Kalina, over to you.

Dr. Kalina: 22:58
Yes, thanks, Alex. A few great questions in there. So first of all, thank you for booking your appointment. I think that means you were on, I think, the first day of booking your appointment. So that's really great. But at the same time, I recognize the kind of consternation that can come from that change from 3 weeks to 16 weeks. Now, there is an exemption form for that delay that is available for people who are receiving immunosuppressive medication such as

chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants, for instance. And also, I believe, for those who are over the age of 80, living under care settings, etc. But what I would encourage you to do is go to the Halton.ca website. The primary reason for that delay in the second dose really is to increase the number of people who are getting a first dose in the community because that, of course, not only overall protects the entire community much more, but also really does a great job of protecting you yourself as well. So, although I would love to see everybody getting their first and second doses as quickly as possible, the second dose delay really isn't cause for concern for me outside of those who are over 80 and those receiving immunosuppressive therapy. The last thing you asked is whether this will be an annual vaccine. I hope not. But it wouldn't surprise me if somewhere in the near future we do get something like a booster shot directed towards variants of concern, for instance. Over to you, Minister Gould.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
24:42

Go ahead.

MP Gould:
24:42

Great. Thank you. Yes, thank you, Marianne. Thank you, Dr. Kalina, and thank you for the really important question, and certainly one that I get a lot. So, the recommendation on extending the doses to 16 weeks was made by NACI, which is the National Advisory Council on Immunization, which is made up of experts across Canada that make these recommendations to the Public Health Agency of Canada, which then shares them with the provinces and the territories. The COVID-19 vaccines are relatively new. They are, as Dr. Kalina and the Mayor have both said, they are safe, they're effective. And they are really important tools in our fight against COVID-19, but they are newer tools. And so, we haven't had as much time to see how long they're effective for. And so, as we get more real-world data, which we're seeing with vaccines here in Canada and in other parts of the world, we're actually seeing that the first dose does provide a good amount of coverage, and that increases once you get the second dose. And so that's one of the reasons why NACI has made this recommendation, as Dr. Kalina mentioned, to try and provide as a maximum coverage for the Canadian population as soon as possible.

MP Gould:
26:07

And just to confirm that we've had over 14 and a half million vaccines delivered to the provinces and territories, we're set to receive two million doses a week from Pfizer from now until the end of June. And we're on track to receive about 100 million doses total vaccines by the end of summer. So, between now and the end of June, we're on track for every Canadian to receive their first dose of a vaccine, every Canadian who's eligible, and everyone to receive their second vaccine by September. And those shipping details and tracking details are available at Canada.ca/Covid19. You can track all of that information. And then the final thing that I would say is that just last week, Minister Anand, the Minister of Public Services and

Procurement, announced that we had come into an arrangement with Pfizer to procure an additional 65 million potential booster vaccines over the next two years. As Dr. Kalina said, we hope we don't have to make this an annual vaccine, but it could be something like the flu vaccine where it's recommended on an annual basis to keep up immunity, and to deal with any potential variants or changes to the virus itself. But nonetheless, the Government of Canada is prepared, and we've already entered into a contract with Pfizer to supply those potential boosters in the future.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
27:48

Excellent, thank you, Minister Gould, very, very helpful and informative information. Ready for our next question, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
27:56

Up next, we have Candice, who's joining us now. Candice, welcome. Please go ahead with your question.

Candice: 28:02

Thank you very much. I appreciate you taking my call. I am wondering, I have had the first part of the AstraZeneca vaccine. I'm wondering what the protocol is for visiting patients that are currently hospitalized with either a full-blown COVID or COVID symptomatic.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
28:29

Great question. And thank you for getting vaccinated. That's great. Great to have you on the call tonight, Candice. I am going to ask Eric Vandewall, the President and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital, to weigh in on that one. Go ahead.

Eric Vandewall:
28:44

Thanks, Marianne, and thanks for your question, Candice. Would you mind repeating that for me, just to make sure I have a clear understanding of what you're looking for?

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
28:54

Is Candice, is still there? I remember the question. I can ask it on her behalf. So, she's gotten her first AstraZeneca vaccination, and wanted to know what the protocol, now that she's had that vaccine, is for visiting patients in the hospital, and especially, any patients that might currently have COVID. So--

Eric Vandewall:
29:16

Great question. So--

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
29:16

--visiting in general and visiting anyone she might know with COVID.

Eric Vandewall:
29:22

Okay, thank you. So right now, we are limiting visitors to the hospital for obvious reasons in terms of keeping everybody safe. However, we are providing access for essential caregivers who may be caring for a loved one while in hospital. And so that process is one really of exception. So, at this time, Candice, you wouldn't be really able to visit your friend if indeed you weren't an essential caregiver. Regardless of whether you're been vaccinated or not, the safety measures are the same for people who have been vaccinated or not vaccinated, and that applies to our staff as well. So, we're always wearing appropriate PPE. Vaccination is just one tool in the toolkit to

keep us safe, but certainly wearing masks, frequent handwashing, if you're in a patient area, you should be wearing a shield as well, a face shield. And so, all of that ensures everybody stays safe. Dale, do you wish to comment on the other part of the question related to the vaccine?

Dr. Kalina:
30:20

Sure, thanks, Eric. Just with respect to you having received your first dose of the two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, Candice, we're still waiting on some guidelines from the Public Health Agency of Canada in terms of what reduction in measures might be possible after partial vaccination and after full vaccination. So, until we receive any of those guidelines, I would encourage you to continue to operate with the other public health measures that we all know and love, like wearing a mask, distancing, and staying outside, not in other people's homes. Thanks, back to you, Mayor.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
30:59

Thank you so much. Over to you, moderator, for our next question.

Moderator Erik:
31:02

Up next, we have another live question, but we're going to do another survey question before we get to that. So, we just want to know, using your touchtone phone, you can indicate your response. How comfortable are you with taking part in virtual or online public meetings? If you are very comfortable, press one. If you are somewhat comfortable, press two. And if you are not at all comfortable, press three. So again, using your touchtone phone, we just want to hear from you how comfortable are you with taking part in virtual or online public meetings? If you are very comfortable, press one. If you are somewhat comfortable, press two. And if you are not at all comfortable, press three. Up next, we have a live question from Tai who is joining us now. Tai, welcome. Please go ahead.

Tai: 31:46

Thank you. We have been hearing a lot about how many doses of vaccines are coming and how many will be coming in the future. That's great news. Now, I have received the first dose of Pfizer, and the next dose will be in 16 weeks. According to Pfizer directions, the second dose has to be administered in 21 days. Epidemiologists and all the doctors do agree that it is important to get the booster sooner than four months. Now, NACI is saying that it should be four months because there is not enough vaccine. That's the reason. But I think it is irresponsible to wait four months because that will not prevent us from catching COVID.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
32:59

Thank you so much for raising that, Tai. You might have recently joined. We did have that question earlier on. But let's answer that one again for any callers that might just be tuning in and want to hear the answer to that as well. So, I'm going to ask Dr. Kalina, our Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at Joseph Brant, to speak to that. And I'm also going to then turn to Honourable Karina Gould, our MPP for Burlington, as they deal with the supply, and also had some comments from Health Canada. And

so, we'll start with you, Dr. Kalina, and then over to MPP Gould. Go ahead.

Dr. Kalina:
33:41

Great. Thank you, Tai. So, I'm glad that you've had your first dose of the vaccine, which is really great. Now, when you talk about the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, having made the recommendation to delay the second dose, you're right. That goes against the manufacturer's requirements. And when we look at vaccines across the board, you actually get a stronger immune response if you have a booster shot that is usually around six months later. Now, we recognize that the manufacturers have recommended that the dose be given at three weeks. But really that policy is to allow for A, higher upfront immunity, but B, to be able to test in the studies that validated this, that this unorthodox practice of getting a booster shot at such an early interval actually worked. So, I'm very happy with the fact that the Pfizer vaccine did work to be boosted at three weeks. But it is somewhat unorthodox for that to have been done. At the same time, I would actually expect a very strong immune response, even if your second dose is delayed up to four months based on the data that we have from many, many decades of vaccines from beforehand. Now, I am hoping that if we are able to get more and more vaccines delivered to our region, we'll be able to speed up that second dose. But we'll have to keep checking back on public health to make sure that that is possible and ensure that most people, if not everybody in our region can get as protected as quick as possible.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
35:31

Thanks, doctor, and over to you MPP Gould.

MP Gould:
35:35

Thank you. Just one "P", just a Member of Parliament, but for--

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
35:42

[crosstalk] [laughter].

MP Gould:
35:43

No, that's okay, that's okay. But I think Dr. Kalina did a really good job of explaining it. And just to reassure Tai and all those listening, I mean, when we talk about the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, it is made up of epidemiologists, immunologists, doctors, experts. These are some of the best experts that we have in Canada who are reviewing the data and making their recommendations based on data science and evidence. And one of the reasons why they made that recommendation for extending the interval between the first and the second dose up to four months is based on the real-world data that they were collecting. And I think Dr. Kalina did a really good job of articulating that part of the reason why there was that three-week interval recommendation from the manufacturer with regards to Pfizer, is because we sped up the clinical trial process, not in any way compromising safety, but to roll out the vaccine sooner rather than later. And so, what the

recommendation was for the Canadian strategy was to try and get as much coverage as possible within the population with the supply that we have initially, and as supply continues to increase, to provide those second boosters.

MP Gould:
37:16

And just to provide some confidence, this is a strategy that the UK has actually been deploying as well. They have been using a three-month interval, but it is based on the information that these experts across Canada have been receiving. And maybe if I just can add on the previous question with regards to what you can or cannot do with a first dose, Dr. Tam, our Chief Medical Officer here in Canada has been very clear that even if you were fully vaccinated, until we reach a critical mass in the country, we cannot be lifting restrictions too quickly. What we see in jurisdictions around the world who have very high immunization rates but lifted restrictions before they got to that critical mass is very high increases and very high caseload when it comes to COVID-19. So, we're following what's going on around the world, learning from their example. And if you look at jurisdictions like the United Kingdom or Israel, for example, that have higher vaccination rates in their population than we do here in Canada, they've been very slowly lifting restrictions, recognizing that you need to have broad population coverage before those restrictions can be safely lifted.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
38:50

Thank you very much for that. Over to you, moderator, for our next question. Oh, actually, no, stop. Wait a minute. Our Member of Provincial Parliament, Ken, who is standing in for MPP McKenna, wanted to weigh in on that last question. So go ahead Ken.

Ken Audziss:
39:09

Thank you, Mayor. On the Government of Canada website, the NACI does have a page that really explains very clearly and simply what they're doing. And the title actually says it all, pretty much. The title is Extended Dose Intervals for COVID-19 Vaccines to Optimize Early Vaccine Rollout and Population Protection in Canada in the Context of Limited Vaccine Supply. And the NACI recommendation goes on to say that as vaccine supply does increase, that there is the possibility of having the second dose administered prior to that 16-week timeline. And so, we saw with AstraZeneca when NACI made recommendations on age groups and then modified those recommendations, that provinces responded very quickly once those recommendations were made to Health Canada, and we were able to quickly get more shots in arms. Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
40:09

Thank you for that additional information. And for sure, for sure now, over to you, moderator, for our next question.

Moderator Erik:
40:16

Well, we have another question coming up now. It's Norm who's joining us. Norm, welcome. Please go ahead.

Norm: 40:22

Yes, thank you. I have two questions. One was-- well, that's not a question. First of all, my wife and I are 72 and, fortunately, we had the first vaccine on April 13th, and it was so smooth. It was so well

controlled. Everybody there was-- it was well worth it. The question I have is, does anybody know how many people in Burlington have had the first vaccine? And the second question is, I know there's so much trouble in Toronto with overwhelming hospitals. How is Joseph Brant doing?

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
41:02

Very good questions. Great to have you, Norm, and thrilled to hear that you and your wife both got shot, number one. So, I'm going to take an initial stab at the vaccines and then turn it over to Dr. Kalina for anything else to add. And then President Vandewall can speak to how the hospital is doing, and maybe add a little bit about the pandemic response unit. I know I get a lot of questions about that, too. But if you go to Halton.ca web page and click on status of COVID cases as a box right from the home page, you will get a huge amount of information, and data, and additional links that you can click. And there is a tab called vaccines. You can see the total number. You can see the demographic breakdown. And you can see the percentage uptake in Halton. And the last time I checked, which was a day or two ago, about 31% of Halton residents have received their first shot. So, we're doing really well here in Halton. I don't know how many in Burlington. That's where I'm going to now turn it over to Dr. Kalina for anything else he can add on that piece, and then to Eric. Go ahead, Doctor.

Dr. Kalina:
42:18

Thanks, Mayor. And thanks for the question, Norm. So, I echo what the Mayor said. So right now, we're sitting at 36% in Halton Region, and that's about 186,000 people who had at least one dose of the vaccine, which is really great. Now, we don't actually have subdivided information about that. What I can tell you is that we've vaccinated approximately 15,000 people at Joseph Brant Hospital, but we also have several other sites, pharmacies, and other mass vaccination sites in Burlington that have been going gangbusters to get people vaccinated as well. Over to you, Eric.

Eric Vandewall:
43:00

Thanks, Dale, and thanks, Norm, for the question. So, Joseph Brant Hospital, let me give you a few stats just to give you a sense of where we're at. So, in general, the hospital system is really under a lot of pressure. As we know, there's a lot of demand for ICU, so intensive care unit, critical care beds across the province, and that's no different at Joseph Brant Hospital. So today, for example, our occupancy is 87%. But typically, we've been 90 to 95, sometimes 100% of the earlier part of this third wave. We have also increased our intensive care unit capacity. So, our baseline is approximately 20 beds. We're now up to about 32 ICU beds. However, that's come at a cost, and we've had to reduce scheduled surgeries to create that capacity, but most importantly, create staff that we could move over to staff those additional ICU beds. So, in terms of our ICU capacity, we have capacity for about 160% of our baseline. And today, we're at about 125% occupancy to our baseline in intensive care.

Eric Vandewall:
44:05

I think the message I'd really want to leave, though, is that the hospital is doing well. We have a solid plan. We're part of a regional

COVID model of care plan that we work with hospitals in Hamilton, Niagara, Brantford, Haldimand, and together we load-level, and share and move patients, if necessary, to make sure that any one hospital doesn't become overwhelmed unnecessarily and is able to still provide care for other services that are needed by the community. So that model is working really well. And the PRU, our pandemic response unit, as you know, is able to care for up to 73 patients. Right now, it's being used to immunize folks. And so, we've provided, as Dale mentioned, I think close to 16,000 vaccinations to date. And we can convert the PRU back to its use for beds in a period of 24 hours. So today, we don't need the PRU. However, we may need the PRU for bed capacity in the weeks ahead, given the projections are quite dire in terms of the demand for critical care in general hospital capacity. So, I hope that answers your questions, Norm, and thanks for bringing it forward.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
45:16

Thanks very much for that. And over to you, moderator, for our next question.

Moderator Erik:
45:21

Up next, we have a question from Laura, who is joining us now. Laura, welcome. Please go ahead with your question.

Laura: 45:28

Hi, there. Thank you, again, so much for all of you doing this call tonight. This is so super helpful. I really do appreciate it. I was advised earlier on from my doctor that because we're thinking about possibly having another pregnancy, that the vaccine that I should be looking for is still Pfizer or Moderna over the AstraZeneca because of the likelihood or possibility of pregnancy. Is that still the case or has that changed?

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
45:56

I'm going to turn that over to Dr. Kalina. Go ahead.

Dr. Kalina:
46:00

Thanks for the question, Laura. So, there isn't any data that would suggest that people who are trying to get pregnant or who are pregnant should get one of the vaccines or another. What I would encourage you to do is to get, as I've said before, any vaccine that is available to you, recognizing that if you are pregnant, you do actually qualify for a vaccine at one of the mass vaccination centers through Halton Region already. But that is only for people who are pregnant as it fits into some of the phase two criteria at this time. But if you are of the age range that would allow for any of the vaccines, including the AstraZeneca vaccine, I would strongly encourage you to get that one.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
46:47

Thanks very much. And back to you, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
46:52

We have another live question coming up, but quickly, we're going to do another survey question for everyone joining us. You can indicate your response using your touchtone phone. We want to

know, during the pandemic, where are you getting most of your information regarding the City of Burlington? If it is the city's website, press one. If it is through social media, press two. If it is the Burlington Post, press three. If it is from the Mayor and Councillors' e-newsletters, press four. If it is via your TV, press five. So again, during the pandemic, where are you getting most of your information regarding the City of Burlington? If it is the city's website, press one. If it is through social media, press two. If it is the Burlington Post, press three. If it is from the Mayor and Councilor's e-newsletters, press four. If it is via your TV, press five. Up next, we have a live question from Andrea, who's joining us live now. Andrea, welcome. Please go ahead.

Andrea: 47:49

Oh, thank you very much. Thank you for taking my question. My question is, due to the fact that we are in the third wave and that we are in the middle of a preventive lockdown, at this point in time, what are your thoughts, projections about public programs, City of Burlington public programs being open for the summer, specifically summer camps programs, library programs, programs like swimming lessons? I know last year they were cancelled, and then they started up again with restrictions. I'm curious as to if there have been any thoughts or plans for this coming summer. Thank you.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
48:31

Great question. Great to have you on the line, Andrea, to meet somebody who's a user of all of our many fine services. And I do have Chris Glenn, our Director of Recreation Services, on the line, as well as Allan Magi from Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services, and also our City Manager, each of which may want to weigh in. But we will start with Chris Glenn to talk about this. Very timely as some information was just sent out to the public, I think, late this afternoon. So go ahead, Chris.

Chris Glenn:
49:02

Thank you, Mayor, and thank you for the question, Andrea. You are exactly right, Mayor. We just put out some communication that we are gearing up for summer camps. We are planning to be open subject to provincial restrictions that we may need to modify as we move forward. But camps are being registered as of the first and we are going to continue with our snap camps, our youth, our leadership programs, etc. And we have a couple of new ones that we're putting in place at this point in time for the summer season. We are also gearing up our pools, so we are bringing back online, or planning to, our two indoor pools that were recently renovated. Angela Coughlan and Aldershot will be back in operation with our other two as well and we're looking forward to that. And don't forget our outdoor pools, we're gearing up for that, having closed down the ice of multiple arenas, as we normally would at this point in time, to get them ready for those that want to use them for floor activities, etc. And we're gearing up for our community gardens to be opened on May 1st, and splash pads a little later on May 24th. And we will get the sports fields going as soon as we can when restrictions are lifted. And the golf course is also ready to go as soon as restrictions are lifted. So, we're gearing up for a very similar

- program offering as we did last year. And it's scalable, meaning that if the restrictions are a little more restrictive, we will adjust. Then if they're a little bit more lenient, we will be able to adjust as well. So, check out our camp program, registering May 1st. Back to the moderator.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 50:33
Thanks so much, Chris. Allan, was there anything that you wanted to add to that?
- Allan Magi: 50:39
Yes, thanks, Mayor. The only thing maybe just to add is just to say that right now that outdoor exercise in the form of walking along our trails and pathways and that, that is permitted. And as Chris pointed out, that we are standing by and sort of ready to open up other outdoor amenities, courts, etc., once the provincial restrictions allow for that. And once that happens, that certainly would encourage people to get out, and get exercise, and do that in a responsible way with the physical distancing and masks were required.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 51:22
Thanks a lot for that, and we are ready to go back to you, moderator.
- Moderator Erik: 51:27
Well, up next, we have another live question coming up from Doug, who's joining us now. Doug, welcome. Please go ahead.
- Doug: 51:34
Thank you. Thanks for having me on tonight. This is a great idea for everyone to hear everybody's wishes, and needs, and questions. That's a great idea. You should do it many times over again.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 51:49
Thanks, Doug.
- Doug: 51:50
Mayor Meed Ward, I'd just like to say you have been such a refreshing Mayor this term. You're so accommodating and accepting of people, and welcoming questions, and I can't say enough good things about you. So, there's a little promo for you.
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 52:08
Thank you. Always nice to hear.
- Doug: 52:11
I had a question--
- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward: 52:11
And I didn't put him up to this. We didn't stage this question.
- Doug: 52:14
No, no, no staging, no staging. I had a question on a provincial level, but I guess Miss McKenna is not there, but someone's there to represent her.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
52:24

Yep, we can get an answer.

Doug: 52:26

Premier had talked about paid sick days, and as it relates to COVID, said it was going to have one of the best ones in North America. And I'm not sure what we were told today is anything close to that. And I'm kind of wondering why it has taken so long after health professional has asked and cried out for 10 paid sick days to stop people from going to work, and having to worry about money, and food on the table, and money in the bank. And this does not seem like it's very helpful. Maybe they can [crosstalk] to that.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
53:08

Very timely question. Thank you so much for joining us and your kind words. And I will turn it over to Ken Audziss, who is from MPP McKenna's office. Both MPP McKenna and MPP Triantafilopoulos are doing house duty, or they would have been here, I know, this evening with us. So over to you, Ken.

Ken Audziss:
53:27

Thank you very much, Mayor. One of the challenges, of course, with paid sick days is that, historically, paid sick days are something that are looked after either from the employer or through union collective agreements. And right across the country right now, what we're seeing is that there really haven't been any new paid sick day programs announced at the provincial level. Fortunately, when we were in the throes of the pandemic earlier in the summer, the federal government, and the provincial governments, and territorial governments signed an agreement. And the agreement, basically, required the provincial and territorial governments to legislate job protected leave so no one could lose their job while they were staying home to self-isolate or care for a loved one. And the federal government would assist with income replacement, similar to what we saw with the CERB, and what we see normally with EI, or the typical paid sick leave programs that exist even outside of COVID. So as a result of that, we ended up with 10 paid sick days. The federal government hearing responses, obviously, from provinces and territories and the needs of Canadians decided to expand that program to allow for up to 20 paid sick days.

Ken Audziss:
54:47

So now, where we're at is that the province of Ontario, the province of British Columbia, the province of Alberta, Manitoba, following the federal government's budget a couple of weeks ago, the provinces and territories are now looking at what they can do to fill in some of the gaps that have been identified in the federal program. So as a result of that, what the province of Ontario has done, and we're the first to do this, is we have Chrystia Freeland, the Finance Minister, actually said the other day that, if Ontario would do what the federal government has done with paid sick days, that they would consider assisting us further. And so, what the federal government did in September of 2019 is they implemented three paid sick days for industries under federal regulation. So earlier today, the province of Ontario announced, just like the federal program, the federal

government's legislation, that we would have three paid sick days during the course of COVID-19. This would allow people to potentially take time off to either get a COVID test, get results, take time for vaccination, etc. So, what will happen is that employers will pay employees up to \$200 a day for three days, knowing that most COVID tests are turning around in 48 hours. And after that time, they'll be able to still qualify for the federal government's paid sick day program, which provides currently \$2,000 over four weeks.

Ken Audziss:
56:29

In addition to that, the provincial government has made an offer to the federal government to double the amount of that program. So, what that would mean is that Ontario, the federal government, would pay \$500 for paid sick days, and the provincial government would top that up with another \$500. That means that somebody who needed to be home on sick leave, whether it's to wait for a test or because they tested positive for COVID-19, would earn the equivalent of \$25 an hour for a total of four weeks. So that really pays a total of \$4,000. So, legislation will be introduced tomorrow to do that provincially. And we're continuing to work with the federal government to make arrangements for the province to provide that \$500 top-up for every applicant in Ontario. And the plus side is, again, B.C. and other provinces that we've been working on this are considering similar options. So, this could end up being something that happens across the country. Thank you for the question.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
57:38

Thank you. And I'm also going to turn to Minister Gould to talk a little bit more about the federal piece of sick leave. Go ahead.

MPP Gould:
57:47

Thank you, Marianne, and Ken did a good job of explaining the federal benefits. And actually, many of you will probably have received the latest newsletter that I sent out to households today or in the coming days where I try to explain this more. So sick leave really is an area of provincial jurisdiction. The provinces and territories have the ability to require employers to provide paid leave under their Employment Standards Act. At the federal level, we recognize how important it was from the beginning of the pandemic for individuals who were ill to stay home, and started with the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, which both provided support to individuals who had either lost their job because of COVID-19 or were unable to work because they were sick or caring for someone who was. We introduced the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, which is now, as Ken mentioned, up to four weeks at \$500 a week to really try to encourage people to stay home and ensure that there were income supports.

MPP Gould:
59:08

This is a temporary program with regards to COVID-19. And I will say that the province of Ontario did provide employment coverage and protection until July 3rd, 2021. However, we recognize that the CRSB, while it is a stopgap measure, it doesn't fill all of the requirements. But I do want people to know that this benefit is available. And if they do need to take it and if they do have

questions, to please get in touch with either my office or the MPPs' office so that we can help you to make sure that you do have access to those supports. Minister Freeland has been very clear that the provinces do need to mandate sick leave in provincially regulated businesses, as we've done for federally regulated businesses. But 96% of Canadians are employed in businesses that are regulated by the provinces and territories. But again, if someone is sick, or is looking to, or needs to care for someone who has COVID, the CRSB does apply to them. And so, if you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
01:00:35

Thank you very much for that. I think we are almost out of time, but I'll turn it back to you, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
01:00:43

Well, Mayor Meed Ward, you are correct. We're just about reaching the end of the TownHall. We do have a couple of minutes remaining. Are there any closing remarks you want to share with everyone listening in?

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
01:00:54

Sure, I'd also like to just give our City Manager, Tim Commisso, an opportunity to say any words to the community. He's here on the line with us. No questions necessarily, but he might have some closing remarks, and then I'll wrap up. Go ahead, Tim.

Tim Commisso:
01:01:08

So, thank you, Mayor. I just think the questions were really responded to well, and I'm much appreciative of the fact that perhaps there's not as many questions for the city, so that's an indication. I would say that we are so ready to reopen the facilities and put back in programming, kind of try to get back to normalcy as best we can, because I think the beauty and one of the things about Burlington, I think, is the extent to which people do value the services or the recreation. [inaudible] find in the parks, 130 parks, we've never seen the use that those parks are getting. So, I think we're ready. And I do want to commend Allan and Chris on how they've been able to respond very quickly as things change. But we're ready.

Mayor Marianne
Meed Ward:
01:02:08

Thank you so much, and I do want to thank all of our panelists for being here tonight, Honourable Karina Gould, our Member of Parliament for Burlington. Ken Audziss who stepped in to provide answers to provincial questions on behalf of MPP Jane McKenna and MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos. Eric Vandewall, President and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital. Dr. Dale Kalina, Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at Joseph Brant Hospital. Of course, you just heard from Tim Commisso, our City Manager. Allan Magi, our Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services. And of course, Chris Glenn, our Director of Recreation Services. I really do want to thank all of you for listening in. The questions were excellent. I learned some new things, as I always do on these TownHalls. So, thank you for your participation. If you did have a question, we didn't get to you, please let us know and we will post the answers once we post the full TownHall on the city's web

page. Again, thank you for your time and we will do this again soon. So, stay tuned for additional details. Back to you, moderator.

Moderator Erik:
01:03:12

Thank you, again, to everyone for joining us this evening. If you have any concerns, feedback, or questions on today's telephone TownHall, I want to remind you, you can share them with us by emailing them to City@Burlington.ca. Again, please email questions, concerns, or feedback to City@Burlington.ca. Thank you, again, to everyone for joining us. And have a good night.