

Sixth wave of pandemic underway in Canada as governments dismantle COVID reporting and last protective measures

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8 April 2022

All signs point to Canada being in the midst of a developing sixth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, triggered by the emergence of the BA.2 subvariant of Omicron and fueled by government let-it-rip policies at the federal and provincial level.

Across the country, case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths are surging after hitting an ebb less than three weeks ago. The fifth wave of the pandemic, triggered by the BA.1 subvariant of Omicron, produced the highest number of infections and hospitalizations on record, and the third-highest death toll of any wave of the pandemic. Over 6,500 Canadians succumbed to the disease during the first Omicron wave, which the corporate-controlled media has incessantly declared to be “mild.”

Some parts of the country, such as the Maritimes and the northern territories, are experiencing their worst phase of the pandemic. Prince Edward Island, with a population of just 157,000, recorded over 2,200 cases per million people on April 2. This rate of infection is higher than any other province or state in Canada and the United States. The Northwest Territories, with a population of just 45,000, was a close second at almost 2,000 cases per million.

On April 6, over 13,500 new infections were officially recorded across the country. This figure is certainly a vast undercount due to the decision of provincial governments to withhold public PCR testing from all but the most clinically vulnerable. In the province of Quebec alone, epidemiologists estimate that between March 24 and March 29, 18,000 to 32,000 people were infected on a daily basis by BA.2.

Dr. Tara Moriarty, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Toronto, estimates that on March 31, over 136,000 people across the country contracted the disease. Comparing official government figures to Dr. Moriarty’s

estimates, the former is an undercount of infections by at least a factor of 10. She previously co-authored a Royal Society of Canada report released in mid-2021 documenting the vast government undercount of COVID-19 deaths.

Dr. Moriarty estimates that in the country’s most populace province, Ontario, with a population of 14.5 million, around 40,000 people were infected with BA.2 on March 31. In Alberta, Dr. Moriarty estimates 37,000 people were infected on March 31, in a population of 4.3 million. The province’s hard-right United Conservative Party government led by Premier Jason Kenney has spearheaded the dismantling of public health measures and the downplaying of the threat posed by COVID-19.

Even the Ontario Science Table, a government COVID-19 advisory group that regularly downplays the severity of the pandemic, raised the alarm of a “tidal wave” of infections on the order of 100,000 to 120,000 new infections per day, based on wastewater surveillance. Given this figure, half of the province’s population could be infected in just over two months. Wastewater surveillance figures across the country corroborate Dr. Moriarty’s projections as well as those of other principled epidemiologists.

The aggregator website covid19tracker.ca has daily hospitalizations nationwide at 4,957 as of April 8, a more than 16 percent increase over the previous week. This figure is almost as high as the peak of the second wave of the pandemic in the winter of 2020, and is on track to surpass the peak of 10,000 hospitalizations during the previous BA.1 wave. On April 4, Quebec reported a 40 percent increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations over the previous two weeks.

Daily deaths are inching up again after three weeks of holding relatively steady at 40 per day. Since deaths are a

lagging indicator of the severity of the pandemic, daily fatalities are set to skyrocket in the coming weeks. Dr. Moriarty's estimates underscore that the official death toll continues to be a gross undercount, with an estimated 165 COVID-19 deaths on March 31 versus an official count of 39.

This immense discrepancy between reported and estimated COVID-19 deaths is due to the limited testing of the deceased. Only Quebec systematically performs COVID-19 testing on those suspected of succumbing to the disease, while the other provinces sweep the growing number of excess deaths under the rug.

The potential long-term impact of Long Covid, which affects an estimated 10 to 30 percent of all those who contract the disease, is mind-boggling. Preliminary studies of Long Covid show debilitating effects on major body organs, such as the brain, as well as the cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and even reproductive systems. With an estimated one-third of the total Canadian population infected with COVID-19 since the pandemic began, anywhere from 1.25 million to 3.76 million people will live and die with the chronic effects of the disease for years and decades to come.

With the approval of the federal Trudeau government, all provincial governments responded to the emergence of the far-right Freedom Convoy in early February by embracing its fascistic demands for the elimination of all public health measures. As a result, widespread public testing and contact tracing, indoor capacity limits, isolation protocols after infection, and mask mandates have been scrapped in the majority of provinces.

Schools across the country have always been incubators for the pandemic. Nevertheless, the vast majority of provinces and school boards have discontinued mask mandates. Only Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the northern territories of Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories still require children to wear masks. In addition, parents have been discouraged from informing their child's school of a positive case in their household. Self-isolation requirements have been scaled back to the point that some children can return to class almost immediately following infection.

Similarly, workplaces across the country allow infected workers to return to work within five days of infection, meaning they are still infectious. Because provincial governments have removed widespread testing, thousands of workers undoubtedly go to work while infected, some without evident symptoms, ensuring that the pandemic

will continue in perpetuity.

The next stage of the government plan to implement the corporate-backed "profits before life" program is to methodically dismantle even the collection and publication of data, while lying outright about the continued impact of the virus on individuals and society.

Only Quebec and Ontario continue to provide daily pandemic reports, although the governments at the Parliament Building and in Queen's Park are undoubtedly working feverishly to overturn this. British Columbia this week ended daily reporting, and the rest of the provinces transitioned to weekly reports soon after the end of the fifth wave.

The corporate press, which throughout the pandemic uncritically reported lies about the virus to justify allowing it to spread throughout the population, is also winding down its coverage. This trend is exemplified by the decision by CBC News to end its popular daily COVID-19 tracker with no legitimate justification.

Political leaders at the provincial and federal level continue to downplay the severity of the current stage of the pandemic. Theresa Tam, the country's Liberal-appointed Chief Medical Officer, declared that hospitalizations and admissions have been "levelling off," before proclaiming that "Canada's health system is ... expected to withstand this uptick."

Similar language has been used by Ontario's hard-right Premier Doug Ford, who called the resurgence of the pandemic just weeks after the fifth wave a "little spike" that the province would be able to "manage."

Quebec's conservative Premier, François Legault, who recently contracted COVID-19, dismissed the disease as "a cold, pretty much," before insisting that "we will have to learn to live with the virus." By "we," the former Air Transat CEO was not referring to the corporations, millionaires, and billionaires he and his government represents, which have been lavished with tax breaks and subsidies throughout the pandemic. Rather, he was referring to the working class, which has suffered unprecedented declines in its life expectancy and socioeconomic position over the past two years.



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