

Winter COVID surge continues across Canada

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A winter surge of COVID-19 continues to unfold across Canada, leading to a sharp rise in hospitalizations, deaths and the continual mass infection and reinfection of millions. Many of those infected are already suffering from the debilitating long-term effects of Long COVID.

According to Dr. Tara Moriarty, a Canadian infectious disease scientist based in Toronto, 1 in 20 Canadians, (about 1.9 million people) are currently infected with COVID-19. Moriarty's forecast for the last two weeks of 2023 rated every province and territory in Canada as "severe" in terms of the level of risk of excess deaths resulting from the disease.

The daily number of hospital beds and ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients has been soaring since a dip in the summer. The past three months have seen hospitalizations reach their highest levels since the previous winter. According to federal data, as of January 9, 2024, 4,705 patients were hospitalized across the country, a further 20 percent increase over October's figures. The majority of deaths continue to be among those individuals aged 70 and over.

Official figures are widely regarded by public health experts and even the federal government as gross underestimations. Wastewater sampling, which has been sharply reduced since the dismantling of all anti-COVID public health protections, currently covers only half of Canada's population. What limited data is available to the general public is purposefully formulated by the authorities in opaque, partial and misleading terms. Media reporting is scant and cursory if reporting is to be found at all.

With the ending of testing mandates and rapid test subsidies, testing in the general population is abysmally low, with some 47,644 tests conducted during the week ending January 16, accounting for less than 2 percent of the country's population. Such is the inaccuracy in official reporting that one 2022 study concluded that due

to low testing rates and a high testing threshold, COVID-19 case numbers in British Columbia could be 100 times higher than provincial data suggest.

Moreover, scientific evidence is being suppressed by officials, including the principled work of Dr. Moriarty. Her research in 2022 demonstrating that COVID-19 deaths are persistently being under-detected and under-reported by officials across the country was smeared by Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe as the "most egregious misinformation."

There is therefore a virtual blackout on information warning the public to the ongoing dangers of the pandemic—a state-driven criminal coverup.

The current winter surge is driven by the highly contagious JN.1 variant, which has spread rapidly throughout the United States to become the dominant strain. By the end of December, JN.1 accounted for roughly 66 percent of cases in Canada, according to data from the federal Public Health Agency. The World Health Organization has listed JN.1 as a "variant of interest," noting that its rapid spread suggests it is either more transmissible or better at evading the immune system than other circulating variants.

In December, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Teresa Tam, acknowledged that COVID-19 still lacks "seasonality" four years on and that it is "still undergoing a fairly rapid evolution as it is transmitted around the world." Her admission exposes the fraudulent claim peddled by capitalist governments around the world that the COVID-19 pandemic would "stabilize" at endemicity through a nationally based vaccine-only strategy.

Tam and the New Democratic Party-backed Trudeau-led Liberal government are directly culpable for the devastating spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which according to official figures has killed more than 57,000 Canadians. In lockstep with their political counterparts in Canada's provincial governments and internationally,

their belated response to the pandemic threat identified in January 2020 and subsequent premature push for a return-to-work turned the country's long-term care homes into killing fields. Then, amid the catastrophic Omicron wave which had led to a record number of deaths since the pandemic began, the Trudeau government greenlighted the provinces dismantling all remaining public health protections. This homicidal "let it rip," profits-before-lives policy was implemented at the behest of big business, which used the Conservative Party-backed far-right "Freedom" Convoy to bulldoze over popular opposition to the lifting of COVID mitigation measures.

A state-coordinated criminal coverup of a pandemic that continues to unfold throughout the world, creating optimum conditions for viral evolution and the emergence of more deadly variants, is well under way.

The efforts of Tam and the corporate media pundits to frame COVID-19 as on the way to becoming a "seasonal" illness similar to the flu or even the common cold is a thinly veiled attempt to normalize mass death and debilitation from a preventable illness. In this case, what is actually meant by "seasonality" is the regular culling of society's most vulnerable individuals in order to free up funds necessary for the further enrichment of the corporate profiteers and the waging of imperialist war abroad.

The coverup, which necessarily includes a relentless assault on scientifically-grounded public health knowledge, has made it virtually impossible for the population to fully comprehend their true infection risk and take the appropriate measures to protect themselves and their loved ones. Mask wearing, even in medical facilities, and vaccination participation in the general population are at all-time lows. According to the COVID Vaccination Tracker, 82 percent of Canadians received the first two doses of the vaccine, but only 50 percent are vaccinated with a third dose. Worse, just 15 percent of Canadians received an updated shot last fall.

The fall/winter surge is part of an explosion of dangerous respiratory viruses, dubbed the "triple-demic" of COVID-19, influenza and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus). It has quickly overwhelmed Canada's collapsing public healthcare system. Emergency rooms are "overflowing" across the country, with wait times "the worst it has ever been," according to one veteran emergency room doctor based in Toronto, the country's most populous city. He described situations where patients are dying in the waiting room because "we don't have a place to put them." In British Columbia, more than

10,000 people are currently being treated in hospital, setting a horrific new record in the West Coast province.

In August, a study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* determined that by March 2023 more than 75 percent of the Canadian population had been infected with COVID-19. In June, Statistics Canada reported that 19 percent of Canadian infected adults reported suffering from debilitating aftereffects known as Long COVID, a complex set of symptoms which includes brain fog, chronic fatigue, shortness of breath and headaches, and can have a debilitating effects on nearly every organ in the body.

Last month, Statistics Canada reported that life expectancy in Canada fell in 2022 for the third year in a row. Researchers attribute this to the exposure to new, highly transmissible variants and "the gradual return to normalcy." In other words, the "forever COVID" policy and its criminal coverup are reversing a century of almost uninterrupted public health progress. COVID-19 has now ascended to the third-leading cause of death in Canada, behind heart disease and cancer.

As we enter the fifth year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world's capitalist elites and their political representatives have proven in spades their complete indifference to the lives of society's most vulnerable. The panel that met at the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland on January 15 to "prepare" for the next impending pandemic, ominously named "Disease X," was nothing more than a corporate meet-and-greet for the health industry to discuss how to better capitalize on the next pandemic disaster.

The horrific atrocities committed against the Palestinians in Gaza by the imperialist-backed Israeli government underscore just how swiftly the normalization of death and debilitation from preventable disease has morphed into the most open forms of barbarism.

The fight against the interlocking catastrophes of pandemics and world war cannot be resolved within the confines of the national state and under the leadership of sociopathic capitalist governments, but only on the basis of the political mobilization of the world's working class armed with an international socialist program for the overthrow of capitalism.



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