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More than 200 bodies found at Indigenous school in Canada

The remains of 215 children, some as young as 3 years old, have been found buried on the site of what was once Canada's largest Indigenous residential school - one of the institutions that held children taken from families across the country.

Cheif Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'ewenipso First Nation said in a new release that the remains were confirmed last weekend with the help of ground-penetrating radar.

More bodies may be found because there are more areas to search on the school grounds, Casimir and Friday.

An earlier release by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said at least 3,200 children had died serial abuse and neglect, and it said it had reports of at least 53 deaths at the Kamloops school alone between 1915 and 1963.

"This study resolves the issue of residential schools and the wounds from the legacy of愧愷kwe to the Tk'ewenipso people," Terry Toews, chief of First Nations Residential School.

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools as part of a program to assimilate them into Canadian society. They were forced to convert to Christianity and not allowed to speak their native language. Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died.

The Canadian government apologized in Parliament in 2008 and admitted that physical and sexual abuse in the schools was rampant. Many students recall being beaten for speaking their native languages; they also lost touch with their parents and customs.

Indigenous leaders have cited that legacy of abuse and isolation as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reserves.



A report more than five years ago by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission said at least 3,200 children had died serial abuse and neglect, and it said it had reports of at least 53 deaths at the Kamloops school alone between 1915 and 1963.

Toews said the Tk'ewenipso community allows for a true accounting of the missing children and will hopefully bring some peace and closure to those lives lost, she said in the release.

Casimir said band officials are informing community members and surrounding communities that had children attend residential schools.

The First Nations Health Authority called the discovery of the remains "extremely painful" and said in a website posting that it "will have a significant impact on the Tk'ewenipso community and in the communities served by this residential school."

The authority's CEO, Richard Jock, said the discovery "illustrates the damage and lasting effects that residential school system continues to have on First Nations people, their families and communities."

British Columbia Premier John Horgan said he was "horrified and heartbroken" to learn of the discovery, calling it a tragedy of "unimaginable proportions" that highlights the violence and consequences of the residential school system.

The Kamloops school operated between 1897 and 1990, when the federal government took over operations from the Catholic Church and operated it as a day school until it closed in 1978.

Casimir said it's believed the deaths are undocumented, although a local museum archivist is working with the Royal British Columbia Museum to see if any records of the deaths can be found.

"Given the size of the school, with

up to 500 students registered and attending at any one time, we understand that this confirmed loss affects First Nations communities across British Columbia and beyond," Casimir said in the initial release issued last Thursday.

The Tk'ewenipso community is still awaiting an investigation for these lost children," Casimir said.

Access to the latest technology allows for a true accounting of the missing children and will hopefully bring some peace and closure to those lives lost, she said in the release.

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Under the first step, up to 10 people are allowed at indoor and outdoor private gatherings. In addition, outdoor sports and indoor fitness classes can resume.

Bars and restaurants will be allowed to have six people at a table, up from the current maximum of four, provided those tables are separated by either two or three additional rows. The rules become more relaxed in Step 2, set to begin on June 20.

The province reported 171 new COVID-19 cases and one related death on Sunday. Hospitalizations also dropped to 109, the lowest total since November last year.

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Coronavirus: What's happening in Canada and around the world on May 30

about with up to 150 people.

Manitoba identified 292 new cases and seven more deaths. The province also admitted 17 patients to intensive care units, up from the current maximum of four, provided those tables are separated by either two or three additional rows. The rules become more relaxed in Step 2, set to begin on June 20.

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downward trend end, as of Friday, 53 per cent of Nova Scotians having received at least one vaccine dose, the Nova Scotia Health Authority said it would begin the final phase of its four-phase, resuming plans on Wednesday.

It will be replaced by Dr. Kieran Moore, currently the medical officer of health for Kingsland, Pictou and Lennox and Addington Public Health. Moore is expected to step into the role on June 26.

Quebec confirmed 315 new cases and two more deaths on Sunday.

New Brunswick logged nine new cases under Stage 2 world see theatres, cinemas, museums and galleries reopen at a third of capacity and restaurants allowed to seat up to six people indoors from different households. Outdoor social gatherings of up to 20 people would be permitted while concerts and festivals could go

With new daily cases on a

In the American, two-thirds of adults in the U.S. state of New York have now received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, as hospitalizations start to decrease again.

In Europe, the UK's vaccine minister says the government may require National Health Service workers to be inoculated against COVID-19 in hopes of preventing medical workers from spreading the coronavirus to their patients.

The increased public health resources will come into effect at 4 p.m. Sunday, as 11 cases have now been tied to the cluster. There are also three new cases reported in the UK.

What's happening around the world

As of Sunday, more than 170 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, according to a database from Johns Hopkins University in the United States. The reported global death toll stood at more than 3.5 million.

In Africa, Myanmars' COVID-19 testing has dropped dramatically and hospital workers are spread thin in the wake of February's military coup, as doctors and nurses who joined strikes and protests against the junta are being persecuted in large numbers.

In Africa, South Africa has extended its nightly curfew and limited the number of people at gatherings to slow the spread of COVID-19 as positive cases surge, President Cyril Ramaphosa said Sunday.

The improved outlook for Canada for 2022 is forecasted at 3.8 per cent compared with a March estimate of 3.5 per cent.

Global COVID-19 vaccine passports likely start Canadian economy? - May 22, 2021

The improved outlook for Canada came as the OECD forecast global output would rise 5.8 per cent this year, up from its forecast of 4.4 per cent in December.

Statistics Canada is expected to release Canadian gross domestic product figures for the first quarter on Tuesday.

Canada's economy could grow by 6.1% this year as COVID-19 restrictions ease: OECD

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has upgraded its outlook for Canadian economic growth.

The Paris-based think tank says it now expects the Canadian economy to grow by 6.1 per cent this year. The prediction is up from an estimate of 6.0 per cent made in March.

The OECD's forecast will be handed to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on June 22.

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Only 20 per cent of workers in Canada want to return to office full time post-COVID: poll

Canadians are in no rush to head back to the office even as COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to decline across the country, a new survey suggests.

A recent poll by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies has found that 80 per cent of Canadian respondents who have worked from home during the pandemic have found the experience to be very or somewhat positive, while 20 per cent went to work in an office every day.

Only 17 per cent described working from home as somewhat or very negative.

Almost 60 per cent of those surveyed said they would prefer to return to the office part-time or occasionally, while 19 per cent said they never want to go back.

The survey, which focused on preparing to return to work from home were convenience, saving money and increased productivity.

Some 35 per cent of those surveyed in Canada agreed with the statement

"My employer ordered me to go back to the office, I would start to look for another job when I can work from home."

The Leger survey queried 1,647 Canadians and 1,802 Americans between May 21 to 25, and cannot be assigned a margin of error because it was done online.

The data comes as several provinces have started easing pandemic-related restrictions and hospitalizations continue to come down from third-wave highs.

Saskatchewan announced the first phase of its reopening plan on Sunday, as it reported the fewest people with COVID-19 since Nov. 28.

The changes that took effect in the province include easing restrictions on outdoor dining, allowing more people, public indoor gatherings to have up to 30 people and public outdoor gatherings up to 150 people.

Quebec, which reported 215 cases on Sunday, will ease restrictions in

Health Minister Christine Elliott

said in a statement the government would move a motion on

Tuesday to replace Williams with Dr.

Kieran Moore, who has drawn praise

in his role as medical officer of

Health for Kingston, Peterborough and Wellington Public Health.

It is B.C.'s case does not take into account how many people have received a second dose.

Alberta

Alberta's reopening plan will lift restrictions in three phases based on vaccination and health levels.

The province announced the new three-step reopening plan on Wednesday afternoon.

Alberta will enter stage one on June 1, which is two weeks after 50 per cent of people 12 and up have received a vaccine.

This stage will have things like indoor dining, but outdoor dining open.

Social gathering limits increase to 10 people, while personal wellness services, like hair salons, can reopen.

Stage two comes two weeks after 60 per cent of those eligible have had a vaccine, which is expected to be around June 26.

Outdoor social gathering limits increase to 20 people, indoor dining resumes, while personal and outdoor gatherings (like concerts and festivals) resume at 50 people.

Stage three kicks in when 70 per cent of Albertans have received a second dose of the vaccine.

According to the province, as this stage all restrictions, including social gathering limits, will be dropped.

At that time, recreational travel throughout the province will be allowed.

Unlike Ontario, the reopening plan

How Ontario's reopening plan compares to other provinces

TORONTO — As Ontario waits to ease step one of its reopening plan, officials in British Columbia and Alberta have unveiled their own pandemic exit strategies that will see restrictions relaxed much quicker.

Officials in B.C. unveiled the province's four-step reopening plan on Tuesday, less than a week after Ontario released its three-step plan.

Alberta will enter stage one — a reopening plan — on Wednesday.

While all three plans are gradual, Ontario will move at a slower pace with much stricter restrictions along the way.

Ontario is expected to enter the first step of the reopening plan on the week of June 14. Alberta will wait until June 1, while B.C. is jumping right in.

British Columbia

Officials in B.C. announced on Tuesday that their four-step reopening plan would immediately allow for indoctrination to resume.

This is something that won't be allowed until step three in Ontario, which will come in late July.

Things like outdoor dining, gyms, barbershops, and shopping centres were already allowed to be open before the reopening plan was announced.

In Ontario, non-essential will be allowed to reopen in step three, which could be as early as Canada Day — masks will no longer be mandatory in indoor spaces.

Ontario has not released any information on when masks won't longer be required.

Alberta's reopening plan will be no rules on personal indoor or outdoor gathering sizes in the province.

By comparison, when 70 per cent of Ontarians have their first dose of the vaccine, indoor gatherings will be capped at five people.

Step three in B.C. will also mean recreation, travel within Canada gets the green light, as nightclubs open with capacity limits.

Ontario will likely be in step one at the point, which will mainly focus on outdoor activities and won't offer nearly the same amount of freedom.

At that time, recreational travel throughout the province will be allowed.

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Unlike Ontario, the reopening plan

Why did Canada's two biggest COVID-19 workplace outbreaks get so big, so fast?

Eight thousand four hundred

oilands workers have now received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Doses were delivered on-site during a series of clinics organized by the Oil Sands Community Alliance and Alberta Health Services.

"As restrictions start to be lifted based on conditions in your area, it is still important that everyone continues to follow local public health advice and keep up with individual protective practices like physical distancing and wearing a mask regardless of whether you have been vaccinated or not," Dr. Thomas

Ostroff announced Sunday that it would move on Monday to replace Dr. David Williams, its chief medical officer of health.

While the province praised his

leadership during the COVID-19 crisis, critics have taken aim at his

laxing communication style and his failure to put strict restrictions in place as soon as a surge in COVID-19 cases started this year.

Health Minister Christine Elliott

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Still, both sites proceeded with spring maintenance projects. The maintenance, also known in the industry as shutdowns, decreased, resulting in a significant increase in on-site labour. CNRL Horizon had an additional 2,000 workers on site.

"Obviously, the government of Alberta doesn't control the maintenance schedule of private companies. We have seen very careful throughout the pandemic to limit the economic impact of public health restrictions," Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said during a press conference May 19.

"It's regrettable that we have seen the recent surge. I do believe it probably is connected to travel with workers coming in from out-of-province and out-of-country. As you know, the government of Canada controls international travel requirements."

McDonald also wrote that two other Black & McDonald employees infected in the outbreak at Horizon were in hospital.

According to both Syncrude and CNRL, strict COVID-19 safety protocols were in place throughout the outbreak. These measures included rapid on-site testing for COVID-19 and strict mask requirements.

"The federal government via Canadian Border Services Agency has

the ultimate authority over essential worker exemptions. Under the exemption put in place by the federal government in April 2020, essential workers are not required to quarantine," said Alberta Health spokesman Tom McMillan.

"Once the federal exemption was given, which is a necessary prerequisite, a matching provincial sector exemption was granted."

Syncrude spokesperson Will Gibson says about 60 out-of-country workers were brought to the Mildred Lake site during the spring turnaround. Most of those workers were required by Syncrude to complete a 14-day quarantine but he says in a "hand full of cases," exemptions were made.

"One example was for a fully-vaccinated contractor brought up from the United States," Gibson said.

Canadian Natural Resources brought out-of-country workers in to help with its spring maintenance project at CNRL Horizon as well. Company spokesperson Julie Woot says none of those workers were required to quarantine upon arrival.

"Canadian Natural required approximately 60 highly specialized technical individuals from the U.S. over the 30-day Horizon turnaround. All federal and provincial requirements for sectors designated as essential services were followed, including the requirement for travellers to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test result issued within 72 hours prior to boarding a flight to Canada. Additionally, Canadian Natural used rapid test kits provided by AHS at Horizon as another tool for COVID-19 screening onsite."

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Mayor Don Scott says he was surprised and concerned to learn out-of-country workers were coming to his community with no required quarantine.

"Any time people are exempt from rules, that's going to cause a problem and I'm surprised that the government would permit that. It just does not make sense for the people of our region. It doesn't protect everybody," he said.

"I've always been a big believer to protect people's health, that's a primary responsibility, as if they're providing exceptions and then there's outbreaks, there is a pretty obvious link between the two."



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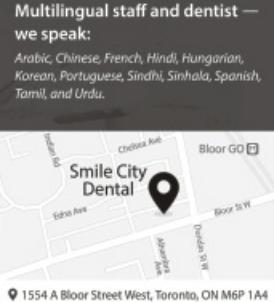
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Priyadarshan on Hungama 2: It's my first Bollywood movie after eight years



Earlier this week, producer Rakesh Jhunjhunwala announced that Hungama 2, the sequel to Priyadarshan's 2003 laugh riot of the same name, will have a digital release on June 4. While the Shilpa Shetty Kundra, Parash Rawal and Meenakshi Jaffri starrer was originally designed for the big screen, the theatre shutdown across most states in the country has led the makers to take the web route.

The decision is disappointing for Priyadarshan, who was set to return to Bollywood after his last Hindi release, Rangrasiya (2013). Speaking to

mid-day from Chennai, the National Award-winning filmmaker says, "I am naturally disappointed as it is the kind of film that people will enjoy watching in theatres. It is a fun, light Bollywood movie after eight years, and I was looking forward to its releasing in theatres. It is not meant for people to watch alone at home. But you cannot blame anybody. How long can a producer wait for the theatre to open? There are about 70 films ready to release, so where will they get their platform? I am confident about the product. It's a comedy entertainer, ka

and I have made some good films in the genre, including Maalmaat (2006), Hukka (2004), Hm Pheri (2008) and Khatta Meetha (2011).

The film's post-production has been stalled due to the ongoing lockdown. "While the shoot and edit are complete, sound mixing and a bit of dubbing is left. There are shut down my Chennai studio. Hopefully, we can complete the post-production when a month," says the director, who has recruited Shetty's hit number, Chak De India, to music the comedy.

Salman Khan announces an animated version of his popular film 'Dabangg' and his fans just cannot keep calm

All the Salman Khan fans out there can rejoice! The superstar may took to his Twitter handle to share the promotional video of the animated version of his popular film, 'Dabangg' and fans just cannot keep calm.

In the promo, Salman's animated avatar can be seen spreading his 'Chaleo' charm as always. There is a peppy song playing in the background to go with it. Along with the video, Salman wrote, "Baahiyai sirf! Agaya hain 'Chaleo' Pandey' aapne animated avatar mein in 'Dabangg-The Animated Series' 1st May se, har roj 12 baar, Cartoon Network par Tumhe Yaar Being Dabangg with Salman Khan ke saath! #ComedyLover"

No sooner did Salman share the news, comments poured in from all



sides. While one wrote, "Ek number Bhai Dabangg is cult classic, Evergreen, larger than life, hard core, with full of bold dialogues... me and it's ALL MILLION STAR... Or ye kids show kuchh bahut kuchh karte huy, another one wrote, "Love You Bhai, We All Super Excited For Dabangg Animated Series, Most

Loved Cop Is Back In Animated Avatar," wrote another. Meanwhile, on the recent work in Preethi Bhavani's 'Radhe Your Most Wanted Occassioner,' the film star showed off his skills as a Randeep Hooda in key roles. It received mixed reviews from the audience and the critics alike.

Salman Khan announces an animated version of his popular film 'Dabangg' and his fans just cannot keep calm

'Where's this place?' ask fans as Lisa Ray shares gorgeous pictures on social media

Lisa Ray is very active on Instagram with her fans and often shares pictures about her professional and personal space. Her latest Instagram post was again personal. It gave us a gorgeous glimpse of what the place is currently staying at, of the place's current stay-at-home caption may not be so far off. "The caption may not be over any Pajamas and walked and walked and [sic] runs in the comments section couldn't help but ask when exactly the place was, and the others

in an interview with mid-day.com, talking about being diagnosed with Cancer and the subsequent treatment, the actress said, "I got over with medication in 2010, and was undergoing chemotherapy. I wanted to go off drugs completely, but two years later, I had a relapse. I saw it as a sign that I needed drugs and something else. Because in cancer, no one ever talks of the talk of nutrition. I went to a retreat in Florida that explores how nutrition can reverse disease. So, suddenly, you have an instruction manual for your body, like you would for a gadget. That was a big moment."

It was in 2012 that Lisa Ray got married to Jason DeJarnett, and a month after the wedding, she relapsed. It is a recent chat with Karisma Kapoor Khan on her show 'What Women Know' that revealed that she tried to hide the relapse from her husband. She said, "This is something that I have not spoken about extensively. It happened just a month after getting married. That was a really difficult time. I was actually hiding that secret from my husband."

PSL season likely to resume from June 9

LAHORE: The tentative date for the resumption of the HBL-Pakistan Super League 6 season, which was last played on May 15, is June 9 or 10 instead of June 5 after five cricketers, two coaches and eight Indian broadcasters were only able to reach the United Arab Emirates on Saturday.

South Africans Farouk Plessis, Riley Rouwens, Cameron Delport and David Miller along with Pakistan's Mohammad Nawaz were among the 14 who had flights landed at various airports on Saturday. Also arriving in Abu Dhabi were South African coaches Herschelle Gibbs and Michael Smith.

Initially 23 broadcasters from India and 27 players, coaches and broadcasters from South Africa were set to arrive in the UAE on chartered flights on May 26 with the Pakistan Cricket Board planning for the 15 remaining 20 fixtures of the PSL season from June 5.

But with countries on the UAE's red-list due to Covid-19, getting visas on time became a big headache.

More Indians and South Africans are expected to travel to the UAE by Sunday and since they have to complete a 14-day quarantine period, the resumption of the season will not



be possible by June 5. The PCB is waiting for issuance of visas for more Pakistani players and officials, who are due to leave for the UAE via a chartered flight from Lahore/Karachi.

Pakistan need to work on team combination, says Wasim Akram

LAHORE: Cricket legend Wasim Akram believes that Pakistan need to work on team combination before the upcoming ICC Twenty20 World Cup, saying the problem at the middle order needs to be resolved.

The T20 World Cup, to be held in India in the month of October, will see the return of the showpiece event after five years when it was last hosted by India in 2016. However, speculations were going around that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) might shift the T20 World Cup out of India due to the COVID-19 situation in the country.

The Sultan of Swing said that the Pakistani team, who won the 2009 T20 World Cup beating Sri Lanka in the final by eight wickets, had a few areas to work on before they can challenge the rest of the top teams.

"Pakistan need to work on their team combination. Obviously, being a Pakistani, I would want Pakistan to win the World Cup. That will be a dream come true for all of us, especially the young captain, and if they need to improve their combination, find the best XI, they can fight. The problem of No. 5 and No. 6 needs to be solved," Akram said.

The New Zealand team are already in the UK ahead of their bilateral series against England and the team will transition from the ECB bio-secure environment into the WTC final bubble on June 15 and will be subject to regular testing prior to and post-arrival in Southampton. To five T20s in the month of July.

WTC final: 'Can't wait to get on the field,' says Cheteshwar Pujara

India's Test batsman Cheteshwar Pujara cannot wait to get on the field for the upcoming World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand.

Team India will be donning the white jersey in the WTC final against New Zealand slated to get underway from June 18.

Pujara on Saturday shared a picture of the new white jersey on Instagram and he captioned the post as, "The new kit is here! Can't wait to get on the field #worldt20championship."

It was in 2012 that Lisa Ray got married to Jason DeJarnett, and a month after the wedding, she relapsed. It is a recent chat with Karisma Kapoor Khan on her show 'What Women Know' that revealed that she tried to hide the relapse from her husband. She said, "This is something that I have not spoken about extensively. It happened just a month after getting married. That was a really difficult time. I was actually hiding that secret from my husband."

Under the guidance of the UK health department:

"The team has already taken the first dose of the vaccine, and is now awaiting the vaccination process for all above age 18. The second dose will be administered by the UK health department once the players are eligible to get the second job as per norms," BCCI sources told IANS.

The New Zealand team are already in the UK ahead of their bilateral series against England and the team will transition from the ECB bio-secure environment into the WTC final bubble on June 15 and will be subject to regular testing prior to and post-arrival in Southampton.

After completing the two-week quarantine in Mumbai, the team will undergo another 10-day quarantine in London. The team will then fly back to the UK and will soon find themselves a hotel room before they take the field to square off against New Zealand, starting June 18.

The BCCI has also ensured that the players will get their second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine in England under the guidance of the UK health department.

"The team has already taken the first dose of the vaccine, and is now awaiting the vaccination process for all above age 18. The second dose will be administered by the UK health department once the players are eligible to get the second job as per norms," BCCI sources told IANS.

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Ont. 'close' to exiting third wave as province records lowest daily case counts since February: Williams

The province's top public health doctor says Ontario is getting closer to exiting the third wave of the pandemic as officials count fewer than 1,000 new COVID-19 cases for the first time in nearly three months today.

Ontario logged 916 new infections on Monday, marking the lowest single-day total since Feb. 17 and the first time since March 6 that the province saw its daily case count dip below 1,000.

Ontario reported 1,033 new cases on Sunday, 1,037 on Saturday, and 1,446 new infections Monday.

The rolling seven-day average of new cases now stands at 1,078, down from 1,775 last week.

Dr. David Williams, Ontario's outgoing chief medical officer of health, has previously said he would like to see a daily case count of 1,000 or less by mid-April before beginning to ease public health restrictions. The Ford government has set a tentative date of June 14 for the resumption of outdoor dining and the resuming non-essential



retail stores at 15 per cent capacity.

"We are still in the third wave. Our numbers are coming down but we are not yet below where we were [at] the transition between the second and third waves. We are getting closer and we want to make sure that we continue on this path," Williams said at a news conference.

"The numbers we talked about today are most encouraging as they have been predicted with our vaccination rates continuingly."

With 18,226 tests processed over the

past 24 hours, the Ministry of Health is reporting a new five-day positivity rate of 4.3 per cent, down from 6.4 per cent last week.

The number of known, active COVID-19 cases in Ontario is now 17,567, down from 20,039 last Monday.

Provincial health officials say there are currently 731 COVID-19 patients receiving treatment in Ontario hospitals with 637 in intensive care units (ICU), including about 30 patients who were transferred to the province from

Manitoba.

Last week, there were 916 people in hospital with COVID-19 and 687 patients in ICU.

It should be noted that hospital admission data is typically incomplete in the weeks as some hospitals do not report information to the ministry over weekends.

Thirty-one more deaths were reported on Monday, bringing the total number of virus-related deaths in Ontario to 8,787.

Of those new cases reported today, 226 are in Toronto, 165 are in Peel Region, 85 are in York Region, and 67 are in Durham Region, and 52 are in Hamilton.

The province says 9,062,025 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine have now been administered in Ontario to date.

Starting today, everyone in Ontario who is aged 80 and older is now eligible to book their second shot through the province's booking system.

"We really have to get second doses in quickly. These variants of concern are spreading and the variants that were initially discovered in India, it is spreading globally, it is here in Canada, it is here in Ontario, it is here in the GTA," Dr. Isla Bogoch, an infectious diseases specialist and member of the province's COVID-19 vaccine task force, told CP24 on Monday morning.

"This is a very big decision because what we are considering is the health and safety of children and young people in Ontario, their teachers and other school officials," she said. "We need to take the time to get this right."

The premier had previously highlighted today's date as an "opportunity" time to reopen schools given the limited number of teaching days left in the academic year.

"We'll have an announcement in the next day or two and we'll get out there and make that announcement if we're going back to school or not," Ford promised when asked whether he had any update for parents.

Schools have been closed for in-person learning since mid-April but with the province planning to enter the first phase of its reopening plan by June 14, there have been increasing calls

to allow students to return to the classroom.

Ford, however, has expressed concerns about the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission associated with reopening schools. The science table has warned that a full reopening of schools would result in a six to 10 per cent rise in daily case counts but in it has called that "manageable" given the benefits of allowing students to return to the classroom.

During Question Period at Queen's Park on Monday, Education Minister Stephen Lecce seemed to express confidence that schools can operate safely but he refused to comment on whether they will be reopened prior to the end of the academic year, noting that his government "needs to take

the time to get this right."

Health Minister Christine Elliott also provided a cryptic response when speaking with reporters following Question Period.

"This is a very big decision because what we are considering is the health and safety of children and young people in Ontario, their teachers and other school officials," she said. "We need to take the time to get this right."

The premier has been very clear about that since the beginning and that is why he is receiving the information that has been submitted to him and Dr. Williams, Minister Lecce and others are reviewing the information carefully so the right decision is made about when a return to school should be happening."

So far local medical officers of health in Peel, Toronto and York have all publicly indicated that they would support reopening schools in their communities. Williams has said that only the Toronto Public Health Unit in northern Ontario has ruled out a return to the classroom.

Canada's controversial decision to delay second doses of COVID-19 vaccines far beyond other countries in the world has raised concerns as a calculated risk - and some experts say that without question it worked.

More Canadians were given partial protection from one dose, as opposed to what would've been half as many fully protected with two. That helped to drive our surging third wave down in much of the country at a critical time.

But some experts say it's time to shift to prioritizing second doses for Canadians because of an increase in vaccine supply, a drop in COVID-19 levels and the growing threat of more contagious coronavirus variants that could jeopardize the progress made.

"There is no question that for the whole of Canada, from the perspective of lives saved, that giving single doses of COVID-19 vaccines would be best for the population they serve."

Shoveling sand into the debate was never meant to distract from the reality that more doses of COVID-19 vaccines would allow for more time to generate heightened antibody responses and improve the boost response of the second shot - much like for other vaccines.

"Of course I want my two doses of vaccines. But if the price of that is somebody else maybe dies because of it - that's just not OK. I think we can't be afraid of that."

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) made the unqualified recommendation to delay second doses by up to four months for all Canadians in March, based on limited real-world evidence and the results of Canada's vaccination.

It said if second doses were stretched by up to four months across the country, about 70 per cent of Canadians on March 16 could get at least one dose by the end of June.

That decision was not without its critics, who pointed to the fact that the vaccine manufacturers recommended sticking to the approved clinical trial interval of two weeks for Pfizer-BioNTech and four weeks for the Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines.

At the time, Canadian chief science advisor, Mona Nemer, said the decision to delay doses amounted to a "population level experiment."

A recent study was also informed by Dr. Danuta Skowronski, the epidemiology lead at the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), who determined that one dose of the vaccines was mostly as effective as clinical trials had initially shown.

Why experts say 2nd vaccine doses should be rolled out now



"It was a calculated benefit-risk," said Dr. Celia Ness, "It was public health doing its job. This is what we expect of public health authorities to take the emerging evidence during a public health crisis and consider what is best for the population they serve."

"There is no question that for the whole of Canada, from the perspective of lives saved, that giving single doses of COVID-19 vaccines would be best for the population they serve."

Skowronski said that it was never meant to distract from the reality that more doses of COVID-19 vaccines would allow for more time to generate heightened antibody responses and improve the boost response of the second shot - much like for other vaccines.

And emerging research appears to be proving her right.

Research suggests delaying 2nd doses may not be the best idea.

A new Canadian preprint study, which has yet to been peer-reviewed, found the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines' effectiveness grows from 41 per cent to 71 per cent after 35 to 41 days.

The observational study looked at close to 525,000 people in Ontario and Quebec and found that while it concluded that while vaccine effectiveness was lower for those aged 70 and over initially - it grew to comparable levels found in younger adults after 28 days.

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specifically, experts say the variant first identified in India known as B1617 could potentially pose a significant challenge to Canada's vaccination efforts.

Prof. Ashish Tute, an infectious disease epidemiologist and assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, said B1617 may be spreading behind the scenes in Canada - much like the variant first identified in the U.K. did.

"We knew that it was here, we knew that it was circulating viruses and we were in a situation where we had declining cases overall, but we were starting to see signs that B117 was starting to take hold," she said. "What we're starting to see the signs of right now is something similar [with B1617]."

But unlike for B117, Tute said Canada isn't able to track for B1617 in real-time, so she doesn't have a "full picture" of the number of cases here aside from a category of variant-positive cases classified as "unknown."

Maria Sundaram, an infectious diseases epidemiologist and post-doctoral fellow at the University of Toronto's Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases, said B1617 is fortunate to be "more transmissible" in our epidemic, yet, but it's something we need to "keep our eye on in the future."

B1617 is currently the dominant strain driving a third wave in the U.K., leading to a surge in not only COVID-19 cases but hospitalizations as well, causing the nation to accelerate its vaccination program in order to avoid jeopardizing the reopening of the British economy.

A recent cluster of COVID-19 in Newfoundland & Labrador that has grown to at least 60 cases was confirmed as being caused by B1617, while outbreaks of the variant have also been detected in B.C., Quebec, Alberta and Ontario.

Dr. Michael Warner, medical director of critical care at Michael Garron Hospital in Toronto, said if Canada doesn't follow suit we could see more breakthrough infections in the partially vaccinated and risk a similar resurgence in COVID-19.

"We need to get the people at the highest risk of being exposed to COVID and the highest risk of being severely ill from COVID their maximum protection," he said. "And I think we have enough supply that we can do that without compromising first-dose opportunities for everyone else."

Doug Ford promises announcement on whether schools will reopen 'in a day or two'

TORONTO -- Premier Doug Ford says that his government will make an announcement on whether schools will reopen for a few weeks in June "in the next day or two."

Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. David Williams and Ontario's science advisory table have both endorsed a resumption of in-person classes on a region-by-region basis but Ford has been slow to make a decision, telling reporters last week that he wants "consensus" before allowing students to return to the classroom.

To that end, Ford wrote an open letter to dozens of medical experts and stakeholders on Thursday seeking their input on a potential resumption of schools by the following day.

Speaking with a pool camera at

Queen's Park on Monday, Ford said that his government is still reviewing that feedback but is getting closer to making a decision.

Williams had previously highlighted today's date as an "opportunity" time to reopen schools given the limited number of teaching days left in the academic year.

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