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New Bank of Canada mandate maintains inflation target but keeps one eye on jobs picture, too

The Bank of Canada's new mandate will see the central bank continue to target inflation in a range of between one and three per cent, but keep one eye on the job market in making its policy decisions, too.

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem detailed the bank's new mandate at a news conference in Ottawa on Monday morning.

The bank's five-year mandate expired this year, so Ottawa consulted with experts and stakeholders across the country to see if any changes were needed to adjust the guiding principle that the bank keeps top of mind in making its policy decisions.

Much like many other central banks, the Bank of Canada has targeted inflation since 1991, when its mandate was to set policy with a view to keeping inflation in a range of between one and three per cent.

All things being equal, that means the bank's only job is to try to manage inflation up or down as needed. When inflation is low, the bank generally cuts its rates to encourage borrowing and spending and investment. It raises its rate when inflation is above that range to try to cool things down.

Generally speaking, the system has worked well for decades, but the pandemic has thrown a wrench in the works as sustained low interest rates implemented to deal with COVID-19 were a factor causing inflation to run near zero early in the pandemic, but more recently has swung in the

opposite direction and is currently sitting at an 18-year high.

There has been a suggestion in recent years that central banks should consider moving away from inflation targeting, and try to achieve other goals with their monetary policy. That could include setting their policy to encourage full employment, for example, or to raise or lower the value of the country's currency - even if that means inflation heats up or cools down as a result.

But after extensive consultations over the past year, Macklem said that it became clear that continuing to target inflation above all other considerations was still the best course of action.

"It's very hard to beat inflation targeting," he said. "It has served us very well."

The new mandate gives the bank the ability to keep targeting the inflation the way it always has, but gives it added leeway to consider what's happening with Canada's employment picture in setting its policy.

The government and the bank believe that the best contribution of monetary policy to the well-being of Canadians is to continue to focus on price stability, the central bank said in a release, adding that they "also agree that monetary policy should continue to support maximum sustainable employment."

"The bank will continue to use the flexibility of the one to three per cent

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

Long lines formed Monday at vaccination centres across England as people heeded the government's call for all adults to get booster shots to protect themselves against the omicron variant, after the U.K. recorded its first death of a patient infected with the virus.

In a televised announcement late Sunday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said everyone 18 and up would be offered a third vaccine dose by Dec. 31 - less than three weeks away, and a month earlier than the previous target.

"We are now facing an emergency in our battle with the new variant, omicron," Johnson said. He said boosters would "reinforce our wall of vaccine protection" against an anticipated "tidal wave of omicron."

Scientists in South Africa, where omicron was first identified, say they see signs the variant may cause less severe disease than delta, but cautioned it was too soon to be certain. Health authorities around the world are watching Britain closely to see what an omicron surge looks like in a country with an older, more highly vaccinated population than South Africa's.

U.K. health authorities say omicron cases are doubling every two to three days in Britain, and it will replace delta as the dominant strain within days. But it's unclear whether the expected wave of infections will inundate the country's health system.

About 10 people are in U.K. hospitals with COVID-19 caused by omicron, and Johnson on Monday said the country's first COVID-19 death involving the variant had been confirmed.

"Sadly at least one patient has now been confirmed to have died with omicron," Johnson told reporters at a vaccination centre in London. "So I think the idea that this is somehow a milder version of the virus that's something we need to set our sights

and just recognize the sheer pace at which it accelerates through the population."

Britain gave no details on the death or whether the patient had been vaccinated or had underlying health issues. Deaths from omicron may have occurred in other countries but none has been publicly confirmed yet outside Britain.

Health Secretary Sajid Javid told Parliament the variant now accounted for around 44 per cent of infections in London and would be the dominant variant in the capital within 48 hours.

More than 80 per cent of people age 12 and up in Britain have received two vaccine doses, and 40 per cent of adults have had three. Giving the rest boosters by the end of the month will be a huge challenge, requiring almost one million doses administered a day, Johnson acknowledged that many routine medical procedures would have to be postponed to meet the goal.

Teams of military planners and thousands of volunteer vaccinators will help give the jobs at doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies and pop-up vaccination centres.

While the online appointment booking system will not be open to under-30s until Wednesday, Johnson said any adult could show up at a walk-in centre to get a booster starting Monday.

Long lines, struggles with booking system

Lines built up at long London vaccination clinics on Monday morning. The line for shots at St. Thomas's hospital, on the south bank of the River Thames in London, stretched across Westminster Bridge toward Parliament.

The government's appointment-booking website struggled to keep up with demand. The National Health Service advised people to try accessing the site later in the day or on Tuesday, if they were having problems.

The government also ran out of rapid at-home virus test kits, which have been distributed free to households during the pandemic. The website where tests can be ordered said none were available on Monday. Starting Wednesday, people in England must show proof of vaccination or a negative test to enter nightclubs and other crowded venues.

Johnson's Dec. 31 target applies to England. The other parts of the U.K. - Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - are also expected to speed up their vaccination campaigns.

The British government raised the country's official coronavirus threat level on Sunday, warning the rapid spread of omicron "adds additional

COVID-19 cases on Vancouver Island

What's happening around the world

As of late Monday morning, more than 270.3 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, according to Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 tracker. The reported global death toll stood at more than 5.3 million.

In the Americas, three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine is the "optimal care" but two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccines or one of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine remains the U.S. government's official definition of fully vaccinated, top U.S. infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said.

In Africa, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's office says that he has postponed getting a booster shot of a COVID-19 vaccine because he has tested positive for the disease and is recuperating from mild symptoms. The statement issued Monday said that Ramaphosa is receiving medical treatment for his symptoms and is self-isolating in Cape Town.

South Africa's regulatory authority last week approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to be used as a booster shot, opening the way for third doses to be administered to adults in order to battle the current surge driven by the omicron variant.

The operator of Ghana's main international airport will fine airlines \$3,500 US for every passenger they bring in that is not vaccinated against COVID-19 or that tests positive for the coronavirus on arrival, it said on Monday. The rules, announced by Ghana's Airports, follow others introduced last week by the health ministry that require all people entering Ghana to be vaccinated. They came into effect for the Kotoka International Airport in the capital, Accra, on Tuesday.

Concerns about the new variant led Johnson's Conservative government to bring in vaccine certificates for nightclubs and to reintroduce restrictions that were lifted almost six months ago. Masks must once again be worn in most indoor settings and as of Monday, people were urged to work from home, if possible.

What's happening across Canada

"N.B. health officials to provide COVID-19 updates."

"N.S. premier, chief medical officer of health to hold COVID-19 briefing."

"Free COVID-19 rapid test kits available at all N.S. public libraries."

"Tougher rules coming for long-term care homes in Ontario as COVID-19 cases rise, threat of omicron variant, sources say."

"How neighbours and communities are divided over COVID-19 in this rural Alberta county."

"University of Victoria cancels in-person exams after spike in



Thomas's hospital, on the south bank of the River Thames in London, stretched across Westminster Bridge toward Parliament.

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Poll suggests 40 per cent of Canadians know unvaccinated people, don't discuss issue

OTTAWA — About 40 per cent of Canadians know a family member or friend who is not vaccinated against COVID-19, and most don't raise the issue with them, a poll carried out this month suggests.

The survey conducted by Leger and commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies suggests four in ten Canadians have a friend or family member who is not vaccinated. Seventy per cent of these don't discuss the matter with them, with half of those saying they have given up trying to persuade them to get protected.



The Leger-ACS survey shows that for 35 per cent of those polled, "it is not an issue" and they don't talk about it, adding they get along well with unvaccinated family and friends. A similar percentage have given up trying to convince people they know to get immunized.

About one in eight of those

invited an unvaccinated person into their homes.

Jack Jedwab, president and CEO of the Association for Canadian Studies, said some research shows taking a "hardline" stance with people who are not vaccinated doesn't tend to work, and a gentler persuasive approach is more effective.

"It's better to take a softer approach. There's not tremendous value in taking a hardline approach," he said.

The poll of 1,500 people, conducted between Dec. 3 and 5, found respondents from Saskatchewan and Manitoba were most likely to have unvaccinated family and friends, followed by British Columbia. Respondents in rural areas were most likely to know someone who is unvaccinated than in towns or suburbs.

Atlantic Canada respondents were most likely to "deflect" unvaccinated family and friends, while Quebecers who answered the survey were most likely to try to convince others to get shots.

Respondents on the Prairies were most inclined to drop the subject and "give it's fine", according to the poll findings.

could outpace Delta and drive infections up to 26,600 a day by mid-January.

"Although this forecast is concerning, we are reminded that models only show future possibilities - and that with fast and appropriate action, we can avoid a worst-case scenario," says a spokesman for the government.

Tam said, speaking on Friday.

"The speed of Omicron transmission and potential for strong resurgence means we must approach the coming weeks with an abundance of caution and at the same time prepared to act quickly to control spread at the first signs of rapidly accelerating cases."

Canada reported more than 4,600 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, bringing the total number of active cases over 32,000. Since the vaccination campaign began, over 80 per cent of reported cases have been among the unvaccinated, while just over eight per cent of cases were reported among the vaccinated.

Over 76 per cent of the Canadian population - including those not yet eligible - is fully vaccinated, and 80 per cent have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose. Over 86 per cent of those over the age of 12 are fully vaccinated, while just shy of 90 per cent of those over 12 have at least one dose.

Omicron COVID-19 variant outlook for Canada has feds 'very concerned,' Trudeau says

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says the government is "very concerned" by the latest projections about the Omicron COVID-19 variant in Canada.

Those projections, made by chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam on Friday, suggest that Canada is on track to experience a COVID-19 resurgence - one that could worsen if the Omicron variant tightens its grip on the country.

"We are, obviously, very concerned with the numbers Dr. Tam shared on Friday," Trudeau said, speaking to reporters Monday morning.

"But I think Canadians are also very aware that we have done many things to keep ourselves safe and we just need to continue them."

Above all, Trudeau highlighted the "importance" of getting vaccinated.

"Making sure everyone is double-vaccinated is really important. As we make boosters available, certain age groups, please book your



appointment for a booster. Let's make sure our kids between five and 11 continue to progress in vaccination," he said.

Canadians might also want to consider whether their holiday plans are in keeping with the latest recommendations from health officials, Trudeau added.

"As we look at Christmas and the holidays coming, people need to be listening to public health advice and making decisions that minimize their risks," Trudeau added.

"I think we've all learned an awful

lot about how to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe, and I know Canadians are going to be thoughtful about everything we do to keep the numbers down, because nobody wants to have another winter in which our hospitals and our front-line health workers are getting close to overwhelmed."

According to Tam's latest COVID-19 projections, Canada is currently seeing a Delta variant-driven resurgence of COVID-19 cases. However, if infections keep rising and Omicron takes hold, that variant

Why omicron is overtaking delta - and what that means for our fight against COVID-19

In the battle of the variants, omicron is poised to win.

While delta has long dominated the bulk of Canada's coronavirus cases, the latest variant of concern is set to overtake other variants both here and abroad as it spreads through more than 60 countries around the world.

Early evidence suggests omicron is more adept at infecting people who've already had COVID-19 or multiple doses of leading vaccines, and the heavily-mutated variant also has an uncanny knack for transmitting between people in the same home.

In other words, it's likely incredibly contagious, and capable of leaving delta in its dust.

And the most up-to-date figures provided by Ontario's science table show omicron has a reproduction number roughly three times that of delta - and a doubling time for cases of only three days - with the variant already making up an estimated 20 per cent of that province's coronavirus cases.

In South Africa, the country which alerted the world to omicron's existence, it only took two weeks for omicron to outpace delta as the dominant variant in geographically sequenced samples, said Jody Boffo, a Canadian epidemiologist currently working as a research fellow at Stellenbosch University in Cape Town.

It's not yet clear what Canada's exact experience will be, given the differences in vaccination rollouts, timelines, and vaccines used in different countries and our overall two-dose vaccination rate - which is far higher than many countries' around the world at more than three-quarters of the population, with boosters now rolling out as well.

Vaccination differences aside, even a less virulent variant transmitting this first omicron-linked death, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned of a "tidal wave" of cases.

The variant is also surging in Denmark, while French hospital officials are warning of an omicron-fueled wavenext month.

The latest federal modelling data in Canada suggests country-wide



coronavirus cases here could quadruple to 12,000 a day in January if "omicron successfully establishes."

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The latest federal modelling data in Canada suggests country-wide

how many Canadians are still somewhat protected by one, two or even three vaccine doses - and more on what happens when it finds its way to those at higher risk of serious infection, including anyone unvaccinated, older, or immunocompromised.

The usual COVID-19 numbers game, several epidemiologists agree, means a fast-spreading, more-contagious variant could again put pressure on hospital systems.

"It is not severe in everybody, we are lucky. But we don't know if that's true," said Otto. "If it's even half as severe among the unvaccinated, that's still too severe. So skyrocketing among unvaccinated cases means more exposed hospitals overrun in mid-January."

Early proclamations of mild disease have given way to a collective pause, as medical experts warn that more time and data are needed to understand the true picture of how omicron infections progress.

South Africa hasn't yet seen a surge in severe illness or deaths roughly a month into its omicron experience, though it's important to note the country has a relatively younger, lower-risk population.

One preprint case study published online on Friday, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, looked at one cluster of omicron infections among a group of young-adult Germans staying in the country.

The seven individuals each had three doses of COVID-19 vaccines, yet developed mild symptoms - including a runny nose, sore throat,

shortness of breath, and for all of them, a dry cough - echoing broader evidence that this variant can evade some level of vaccine-induced immunity.

A line in the preprint case held promising news: "This suggests that full vaccination followed by a booster dose still provides good protection against severe COVID-19."

But will the potential for milder infection hold true as this variant spreads more to older adults, particularly those who aren't yet vaccinated or have pre-existing health issues?

"I really want to emphasize [that] we do not know it's milder for everybody," said Otto.

Protect community through 'individual actions'

Given the uncertainty over omicron's severity, and the mounting evidence that it can spread through both unvaccinated and vaccinated populations, it may be time to brace for the worst, even as the world hopes for the best.

One Canadian modelling expert - speaking on background due to their role with a federal advisory body - noted early data from Ontario shows the province was already in a period of exponential growth, even without omicron in the mix.

"Once it becomes more established here, we're going to very quickly have an overwhelmed health care system," they said in an email to CBC News. "Vaccinations are coming online too slowly to markedly change that trajectory, and beyond hoping for boosters to save us, we're not doing anything."

While most of the serious COVID-19 infections would likely be among the unvaccinated, as seen throughout the pandemic, enough breakthrough cases tied to a more-contagious variant could mean a rising number of serious infections among vaccinated Canadians as well - if the virus has the opportunity to spread.

As millions of families are set to gather for the holidays, and as most Canadians continue going about their daily lives with few public health restrictions to dissuade them, Otto stressed there's a renewed need to maintain basic precautions, even if you're vaccinated.

"We protect our community by all of our individual actions," he said.

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Kaushal-Katrina Kaif's MEHENDI Ceremony: Newly Married Couple Looks Regal As They Dance Their Hearts Out

Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal got married in an intimate ceremony on December 9 at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan. Their wedding was an extremely private and glitzy affair with their families and a few Bollywood friends in attendance. The newly married couple has been treating fans to their breathtaking photos from the wedding ceremonies. After dropping stunning pictures from the mehendi and Haldi, Kaushal and Vicky have now shared pictures from their colorful Mehendi ceremony.



Both the actors took to their respective Instagram accounts to give a glimpse of their Mehendi, which seemed to be all about dance, laughter, colours, and family. Sharing the clicks, the couple wrote, "Mehendi! Tas Sadij Je Nachle Saara Tabahar!" In one of the pictures, Vicky-Katrina is seen doing the bhanga. In another shot, Vicky is seen sitting on one knee while

radiant smiles, impressive dance moves, and of course, VickyKat's stunning chemistry. On Saturday, Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal had shared a sneak-peek into their Haldi ceremony. The post was captioned, "Shukr. Sabr. Khushi! (gratitude, patience, happiness)." The newlyweds will reportedly host a grand wedding reception for their industry friends in Mumbai soon. The invite has got leaked on social media and it showed a pink hamper full of goodies. An India Today report claimed that the reception invite contained a handwritten note to the ones who could not attend the wedding and promised to see them soon. It also has meticulously lauded, itar (Arabic perfume), scented candles, seeds for saplings, flowers and, without fail, they also added a thoughtful "thank-you" note. Shukar Rab Da Shukar Sab Da is also written on the invite.

Mira Rajput Has An EPIC Reply For Netizens Who Trolled Her For Her Feet; Here's What She Said

Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira Rajput is one of the few celebrities who is very active on Instagram. She uses the platform to share her jaw-dropping pictures, family moments, and her opinions on various matters. She also has been trolled multiple times because of multiple reasons. But she comes every time to shut down the hater.

Speaking of that, she shared a new sun-kissed picture of herself on Saturday and in the caption that has all our attention. Sharing the beautiful picture, she wrote, "I would like to thank my arms for always being by my side, my legs for always supporting me, and my fingers because I can always count on them. And of course my feet, for always keeping me grounded." This came after the actress was trolled a few days ago for her feet. For the uninitiated, she had shared a picture of herself featuring her son Zain Kapoor. She looked beautiful as ever, but many trolled her as the complexion of her feet looked different. Fans dropped comments saying, "Aapke pairon ko kya hogaya." Another wrote, "Please make proper foot care."

Mira has clearly won the internet with her epic responses to the trolls. One of her followers dropped a comment saying, "Well said!" Another wrote, "Perfectioner."

Left is right as Harsh, Kevin help MIG CC enter semis



MIG Cricket Club's left-handers-opener Kevin Dlamids (100) and pacer Harsh Tanna (5-74) helped the Bandra East club beat National CC by 98 runs in the last league game of the Police Shield at Cross Maidan on Sunday. Resuming on the overnight score of 308-6, MIG were dismissed for 335 in 68 overs. Dlamids's 101-ball knock was laced with 14 fours and two sixes. No. 6 batsman Anand Bais contributed 82 (66/4, 3/6). National CC's left-arm spinner Shaahlikat Kadam and pacer Ravinder Solanki claimed three wickets apiece. In reply, National CC were

bowled out for 237 in 47.1 overs. Chinmay Sutar, who was part of Mumbai's Oman tour in August-September and former India U-19-wicketkeeper-batsman Vedant Markar scored 69 and 62 respectively. Tanna, 22, tormented National CC batsmen with his pace and swing while taking his maiden first of the tournament. MIG CC will play Parsee Gymkhana in the semi-final next weekend. In Group 'C', Parsee Gym, who clinched the Padmakar Talim Shield T20 title and the Madhav Mantri Centenary One-Day League recently, defeated Shivaji Park

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Karnataka beat Mumbai by 7 wickets

Karnataka humbled Mumbai by seven wickets as R Samarth scored an unbeaten 96 in an Elite Group 'B' match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Saturday. Defending champions Mumbai managed to post 208-9 in the allotted 50 overs. Opener Yashveer Jaiswal and wicketkeeper-batsman Hardik Tamore scored 61 and an unbeaten 46 respectively. Saayankar Yadav could not make much of an impression, falling for eight to leg-spinner Praveen Dube (4-29). Karnataka secured a convincing win with 27 balls to spare. Meanwhile in Group 'A', leggie Abhishek Raut's first helped Odisha beat Vidarbha by six wickets at Thane's Dadoji Kondade Stadium. Electing to field, Raut spun a web around opposition batsmen, registering figures of five for 36 to restrict Vidarbha to a below-par 148.

Joe Root defends team selection; says fielding and batting let England down

England captain Joe Root blamed the batting and fielding effort of the side for the nine-wicket loss in the Ashes opener at the Gabba on Saturday, adding that there was nothing wrong with team selection. The tourists after a brief fightback on Day Three lost eight wickets on the morning of Day Four for just 77 runs as their innings folded up for 297 runs. Australia, set a target of 20 runs, finished the job in the sixth over for the loss of Alex Carey. The England team management has drawn



Root was excellent. "We beat the ball a huge amount of times, we batted out the areas that you've got to on this kind of wicket, we've just got to be better in the field. Similar with the bat, 40 [runs] for four [wickets] is no position to start a Test series," Root said. Brifefoons England 147 & 297 (J Root 89, D Malan 82; N Lyon 4-91) lost to

Nora Fatehi And Guru Randhawa Spark Off Relationship Rumours After Their Goa Vacation Pictures Go Viral; Curious Fans Ask, 'Are They Dating?'

Nora Fatehi needs no introduction. The actress has been on a spree grabbing headlines for all the right reasons. While there has been no development on her personal front, a recent report suggests that Nora is establishing closeness with singer Guru Randhawa.



For the unversed, Guru Randhawa, a Punjabi pop star, is currently one of the most popular artists in the industry. Last year, Nora and Guru were seen collaborating for a music video - 'Naach Meri Rani'. The duo stunned the fans with their smouldering chemistry in the video. There seems to be a closeness between the two, as they were seen jetting off to Goa for a vacation.

Now, new pictures of Nora Fatehi and Guru Randhawa's Goa vacation have surfaced on the internet, and fans suspect they are in a relationship. In the pictures, the rumoured couple was seen having fun on the beach, they

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38 سالہ لڑکی ملحقہ کوئی پٹنہ، پٹی، اور اسلواکھا کینیڈا میں سٹیوین،
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Ontario needs new pandemic response strategy as omicron makes inroads: experts

With the omicron variant poised to become Ontario's dominant COVID-19 strain, experts want the province to explain how it plans to shift its pandemic response if many people are infected much more quickly than previous waves.

"We obviously have dealt with this for two years, but this is very different," said Dr. Zain Chagla, an infectious diseases specialist at McMaster University.

"We're going to see something I don't think we've seen before."

Ontario announced two weeks ago that it had detected Canada's first two omicron cases. Since then, the variant has come to represent about 11 per cent of infections, according to the province's expert pandemic advisory panel, and has begun spreading in local communities.

The province's top doctor has said he expects omicron will become dominant within weeks. The development comes amid weeks of a steadily rising case curve, with

1,476 cases reported on Sunday and a seven-day average of 1,236 daily infections, up from 526 a week ago.

Scientists are still probing omicron's exact characteristics. But based on trends seen in omicron-dominant regions like South Africa, Chagla said Ontario must determine how it will respond if up to 10,000 people are infected each day.

"It's going to be tough in the next month or two."

That scenario would strain the current public health approach of tracing and testing the contacts of all infected people, he said, meaning resources would have to be prioritized.

"The way we've managed COVID in March of 2020 is going to have to be different when we see such high rates of transmission in our community. I think those discussions need to happen now," Chagla said.

With so much potential spread, he said it's also possible that swaths of health workers could be forced to

isolate at once, putting essential services at risk. The province should figure out how it will avoid that situation, Chagla said.

"Going into the holidays, all of our health care and otherwise - want some guidance in terms of how to deal with this so that we're not scrambling and shutting down services when people need them the most."

University of Toronto epidemiologist Dr. Jeff Kwong said omicron is hitting Canada at the worst possible time, as health workers contend with burnout and pandemic-wary residents subject to relatively fewer public health restrictions gear up for holiday gatherings.

"I think it's going to spread really quickly in Ontario," Kwong said. "It's going to be tough in the next month or two."

The potential for rapid spread is concerning for high-risk residents, Kwong said, because the province's booster shot plan was based on the

delta variant being the dominant COVID-19 strain, and those who need boosters the most may be exposed to omicron before they get their doses.

He said it's not possible to get third shots to everyone before omicron shifts into high gear, but priority should go to the coming weeks to creative solutions for quickly vaccinating the vulnerable and front-line health workers.

People aged 50 and older will be eligible to book third doses starting Monday. Others including people 70 and older, Indigenous adults, front-line health-care workers, long-term care residents and people with certain health conditions are currently eligible for boosters, and the province has said it plans to open third dose bookings to all adults in the new year.

Getting a booster as soon as eligible is one way individuals can mitigate COVID risk, Kwong said, along with minimizing social indoor gatherings and prioritizing good ventilation. He said tighter capacity rules and stronger enforcement of mask policies could also help from the government side.

Chagla said preparations for major omicron spread should happen regardless of other policy decisions.

Better Transit for Everyone: MiWay Launches Customer Charter

Today, MiWay released their new Customer Charter - a public commitment on what transit customers can expect from MiWay.

The Charter was developed in response to MiWay's ongoing effort to improve the customer experience and ensure a consistent and safe transit system for all. It was developed in consultation with MiWay customers and stakeholders through focus groups, research, one-on-one interviews, and market research. The Charter supports MiWay's Ridership Recovery Strategy and helps advance the City's Strategic Plan, in particular the Move pillar.

"The time has come for us to raise the bar and reach new heights when it comes to serving our customers," said Geoff Maronoff, Director, Transit. "We remain open and transparent about our decision to set a goal, measure how we are doing and that we hold ourselves accountable. Transit customer charters have become an

industry standard and ours supports MiWay's commitment to continuous improvement. Part of our mission is to help make life in our city better. We are doing this by listening to our customers and stakeholders as we continuously work to meet the changing needs of the community. During these unprecedented times, it's more important than ever that our customers understand the effort and commitment we are investing to improving their overall transit experience - from reliability, safety and security to customer service and access to information, transit users can expect a lot from MiWay."

MiWay's Customer Charter consists of four main elements:

Safety first

"The safety of customers, employees and all those who come in contact with our transit service is important to MiWay."

"MiWay is focused on wanting everyone to feel safe and secure while riding the bus and sharing the road

DOUG FORD'S SHAMEFUL CHILDCARE DELAY LEAVES ONTARIO AS THE ONLY PROVINCE WITHOUT A CHILDCARE DEAL

TORONTO - Ontario Liberal Leader, Steven Del Duca has issued the following statement:

"Now that New Brunswick has reached an agreement with the Federal Government on affordable childcare, only Ontario families are left without a deal. Parents are shouldering the cost of Doug Ford's political standoff."

Ontario Liberals have been calling for a \$10/day childcare deal for seven months. In that time, every other province, led by governments of all party stripes, have reached deals. Even Jason Kenney has reached a childcare deal before Doug Ford.

When Ontarians visit the ballot box next year, we will all remember that when push came to shove, Doug Ford was more focused on building highways to reward his rich friends than on scoring a win for Ontario families."

Ontario residents report problems booking COVID booster shots as eligibility for 50+ opens

TORONTO - Ontario's portal for booking COVID-19 vaccines appeared to crash Monday morning as residents 50 and older who received their second shot at least six months ago became eligible for booster doses.

The provincial vaccine booking platform opened for appointments at 8 a.m. but shortly afterwards showed a message to try again later.

Social media users reported a number of problems on Twitter and expressed frustration with the province's online booking system.

"I waited in line for 30 minutes to get on and after entering in my info, I got a 'Service unavailable' message," one person wrote.

"Giving up after an hour of trying and crashes, and re-entering info; I have to do some actual work today. Will try later this week, or after the holidays," another said.



Some, however, reported successfully booking a third dose after several attempts or waiting more than 30 minutes.

A spokeswoman for Health Minister Christine Elliott says the province is working to resolve the "intermittent technical issue."

Alexandra Hillene says people should be patient, keeping trying to book and try calling the province's phone booking line.

While Hillene says thousands of people were able to book appointments, many people complained of issues with the system

on social media Monday morning.

People can also book shots by phone, through local public health units using their own booking systems and at some pharmacies and primary care clinics.

Booster eligibility is set to open up to all adults on Jan. 4 but the province's top doctor has said the schedule could move faster if capacity allows.

The expanded eligibility comes as Ontario's panel of expert advisers on COVID-19 said that the Omicron variant - first detected in the province in late November - now accounts for 21 per cent of Ontario's COVID-19 cases.

Cases of Omicron are doubling every three days, the group said.

"The current surge is mostly Delta, but it's hitting us just as we need to be ramping up for Omicron, and it's a sign of how vulnerable is," the panel said in a tweet.

Monday also marks the deadline for long-term care workers in the province to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Staff, students and volunteers can't enter long-term care homes without proof of both doses.

A statement by Scarborough Centre MP Salma Zahid

It's time for the federal government to join the court challenge against Bill 21

OTTAWA - The removal of a teacher from her classroom in Chelsea, Quebec for wearing a hijab is yet another example that makes clear what has been known since it was first conceived: Bill 21 is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and discriminates against religious minorities - particularly Muslim women that wear the hijab, Jewish men that wear the Kippah, and Sikh men that wear the Dastar.

That parents are having to explain to their children why their teacher has been taken from their classroom is heartbreaking. For children to have to learn at such an early age that such discrimination exists in our world, in our country, is sad. We should be teaching our children love and understanding and compassion.

Rather than breaking down the differences between different groups, it is calling attention to them. It is telling certain groups they are less than, that they aren't welcome unless they suppress their own choice and beliefs and conform.

This cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged. To date, the challenge has come from civil society. But as the party that brought the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to Canada, as a government that champions human rights around the world, we cannot allow the weight of this fight to be carried by civil society alone.

It is time for the Government of Canada to join the legal challenge filed by the National Council of Canadian Muslims and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. It is time for the government to intervene.

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