

COVID-19 updates for the week of March 7

BY MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In Canada, according to the chief public health officer of Canada Dr. Theresa Tam, in a news release from March 4, during the latest seven-day period from Feb. 25 to March 3, an average of 5,663 new cases were reported daily across the country, a decrease of five per cent versus last week. Severe illness trends continue to lower with weekly declines in many jurisdictions. During the past week (Feb. 25 to March 3) an average of 5,153 people were in hospital with COVID-19 each day, a 15 per cent reduction from the week before. On average, 618 people were in the ICU, which is a 16 per cent decline from the previous week, while an average of 58 deaths were reported daily. In Ontario, as of March 7, there were 1,074 new cases reported, with 1,365 cases reported as resolved. There were 693 hospitalizations with 249 people in the ICU. There were three deaths reported. In Hastings Prince Edward, as of March 7, there were 64 new high-risk cases and active high-risk cases amounted to 162 people. There were eight outbreaks in high-risk settings like LTC homes, and there were 44 deaths reported. There are 17 people who are currently hospitalized at Quinte Health Care hospitals and three people are in the ICU. Industry groups and municipal leaders call for an end to travellers' COVID-19 testing. Over a dozen municipal leaders in Canada, including the mayors of Windsor, Niagara Falls and Sarnia have asked the federal government to scrap COVID-19 testing requirements for fully vaccinated people to cross the Canada/U.S. border. The Tourism Association of Canada and the Hotel Association of Canada have also called on the Trudeau Liberals to cease these testing requirements. As of Feb. 28, travellers coming into Canada no longer have to take a PCR test but are still required to take a prearrival test or an authorized rapid antigen test before entering the country. The Tourism Association of Canada, the Hotel Association of Canada and the municipal leaders arguing against these tests say it provides a negligent level of protection and may deter travellers from coming to Canada at all, instead opting to go to countries that no longer have any testing requirements. The tourism industry has been particularly hard hit during the pandemic. A typically \$105 billion a year industry has been reduced by approximately 50 per cent. Canada recorded 96.8 million arrivals (non-residents and returning Canadians) in 2019 according to Statistics Canada. That number dropped to 25.9 million in 2020 and 18.8 million in 2021. International study links moderate physical activity to less severe COVID-19. South Africa's University of Witwatersrand and Western University conducted a study that found that moderate physical activity blunted the severity of COVID-19, protecting against hospitalizations, ICU admissions and death. They studied the health outcomes of over 65,000 patients from March 2020 to June 2021, and found that even 60 minutes of physical activity a week made a positive difference in the health of someone who contracts the virus. The moderate category, as stipulated in the global physical activity guidelines from the World Health Organization, involves participants active from one hour to two and a half hours per week. They also said that the activity doesn't have to be rigorous to have an effect on decreasing the virus' effects. With this level of physical activity, researchers saw hospitalizations fall by approximately two thirds, with ICU admissions and ventilation down by almost 50 per cent versus those who didn't exercise at all.