

August 18, 2021

Memorandum to: All COVID-19 Vaccine Providers and Clinics

From: Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario

Dr. Homer Tien
Chair, COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force

Subject: COVID-19 Vaccine Program Evolution in Ontario

The COVID-19 vaccination program has been a great success in Ontario due to the efforts of many sectors and individuals, and because so many Ontarians sought out vaccination and completed their series. The following memorandum addresses the evolution of the COVID-19 vaccine program in Ontario and the potential for unused vaccine doses.

Due the efforts of countless individuals in Ontario, as of August 12, 2021, over 20M doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered, and over 9.4M people have completed their vaccine series in the province. Although the vaccine program in Ontario has seen great success, it is important to continue to strive to achieve higher coverage to support the province's *Roadmap to Reopen*, especially in the context of the surging Delta variant.

With both routine vaccine programs (e.g., against measles) and especially with large scale vaccine programs (e.g., against COVID-19), unused vaccine doses as a result of program implementation are expected. It is important to balance the program roll-out and coverage objectives in Ontario against the global picture and vaccine supply, when considering unused vaccines from opened vials.

COVID-19 Vaccine Program Roll-out and Evolution in Ontario

The goal in Ontario remains to optimize the use of COVID-19 vaccines and limit the number of unused doses through effective storage, handling, and program and clinic strategies.

With a large portion of the Ontario population vaccinated, the program is evolving on many fronts, and it is becoming increasingly important to maximize vaccination events and opportunities across settings, such as taking vaccine to those who are not coming to clinic spaces or are not able to.

With this program progression, several factors are predicted to lead to increased unused dosages. These factors include vaccine packaging in multi-dose vials, strict storage and handling requirements and limited post-puncture time for product use. Having unused doses, especially for open vials, is expected.

As part of the current efforts to reach increased coverage targets in the province to protect individuals and the population, it is important to take every opportunity to vaccinate, especially for those who may be vaccine hesitant and for those who may be less likely to return for their vaccine, either first or second doses.

Therefore, opening a vial to vaccinate one or a small number of individuals will be necessary to support vaccination efforts and reaching provincial targets. This is especially important where a vial is reaching its “must use by” date. Efforts should continue to be made in these instances to locate other potential individuals for vaccination (e.g., waitlists) wherever possible.

While unused doses in open vials are expected to increase, it remains important to limit expiry of closed vials through proper inventory management and storage and handling, including fridge monitoring (e.g., temperature logs), stock rotation based on expiry and “must use by” dating, and recommended packing and transport per product specifications. See Appendix A for information and resources.

For local information and support for providers and clinics please contact your local public health unit. Your public health unit can be located at the following link <https://www.phdapps.health.gov.on.ca/PHULocator/Default.aspx>

COVID-19 Vaccine Program Planning

The province continues to work with the federal government and other provinces and territories in Canada on COVID-19 vaccination programming.

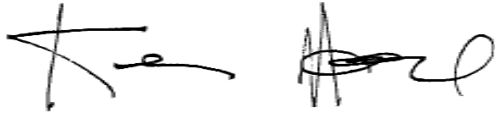
The ON approach to unused vaccine is aligned with the Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial/ Indigenous (FPTI) consensus approach to maximize coverage rates by leveraging every opportunity to vaccinate eligible individuals and the potential for unused doses given the vial format and storage and handling requirements. The province continues to support federal efforts in advocating that manufacturers shift product formats and packing away from large vials and trays.

The province is currently working with the federal government on possibilities for the donation of COVID-19 vaccine doses internationally, as well as reallocations within the country based on forecasted demand and uptake in the province.

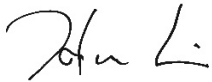
As an important global resource, we will continue to build on the success and optimal utilization of vaccine doses in the program thus far as the province works to increase uptake. Vaccine coverage and the use of the provincial vaccine supply will continue to be monitored to support vaccination in Ontario, Canada and globally.

Thank you for your continued efforts in the roll-out of the Ontario COVID-19 vaccine program.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kieran Michael Moore in black ink.

Dr. Kieran Michael Moore, MD, CCFP(EM),
FCFP, MPH, DTM&H, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Handwritten signature of Homer Tien in black ink.

Dr. Homer Tien, MD, M.Sc., FACS, FRCSC
Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force
Task Force

Appendix A

Information and Resources

Ministry of Health – Guidance for the Health Sector

[COVID-19 - Guidance for the Health Sector - Ministry Programs - Health Care Professionals - MOH \(gov.on.ca\)](#)

Ontario Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines for Health Care Providers

[Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines \(gov.on.ca\)](#)

Canadian Regulatory Information and Resources

[Drug and vaccine authorizations for COVID-19: List of authorized drugs, vaccines and expanded indications - Canada.ca](#)