

COVID-19/HEALTH/WELLNESS--Update on Nova Scotia's COVID-19 Immunization Plan

Nova Scotia's COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues to expand this week with clinics at two more long-term care facilities and another regional hospital.

Health officials provided an update on the program today, Jan. 19, that also included plans for additional vaccine storage locations and new community clinics.

"We know that Nova Scotians are eager to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and our health-care system is working as quickly as possible to make that happen," said Premier Stephen McNeil. "In an effort to vaccinate those at highest risk, and those who are critical to the health-care response in our province, we will target our efforts where they will have the greatest impact until our vaccine supply increases."

New clinic locations this week include Colchester-East Hants Health Centre, and two long term-care facilities: Northside Community Guest Home in North Sydney and Harbourstone Enhanced Care in Sydney.

Over the next three months, the province will focus on delivery to health-care workers directly involved in the COVID-19 response, as well as staff, residents and designated caregivers in long-term care and residential care facilities.

It will also launch prototype clinics to help prepare the province to deliver and administer large quantities of vaccine as supply increases. Those include community clinics for those aged 80 and over and clinics in First Nations and African Nova Scotian communities delivered by physicians and pharmacists.

"Our immunization plan has been strategic and flexible from the start and it will continue to evolve as more information about the vaccines, our supply and best practices becomes available," said Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's chief medical officer of health. "Age will be the main way we prioritize community immunization, because we know the impact COVID-19 has on older people."

Over the next 30 days, the province will:

- establish three new cold storage sites in Antigonish, Amherst and Bridgewater (by the end of January). They will have the equipment needed to store all types of COVID-19 vaccine. This will bring the total cold storage sites to nine
- open three new health-care worker clinics at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, Yarmouth Regional Hospital and St. Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish. This will be in addition to the four clinics currently operating
- use Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to open more clinics in long-term care facilities, regional rehabilitation centres and adult residential centres

Over the next 60 to 90 days, the province will:

- open health-care worker clinics in Amherst and Bridgewater

- launch prototype clinics for seniors who are 80 and older in Halifax and Truro. These seniors will receive a letter from MSI on how to schedule their appointment
- launch prototype clinics for First Nations and in African Nova Scotian communities
- set up mass immunization clinics in all communities with cold storage sites
- expand healthcare worker clinics beyond those most closely involved in COVID-19 response, for example: primary care physicians, pharmacists, homecare workers.

The province has also engaged Doctors Nova Scotia and the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia on how their members can support vaccine delivery in the community, so Nova Scotians can be vaccinated quickly and safely. Prototype clinics could also include pharmacies and doctor's offices.

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