Twitter Thread by Kate Allen



Kate Allen
@katecallen

ICYMI, public health officials fear community transmission of B.1.1.7 (the "UK variant") is underway in Ontario.

I'll dissect each piece of worrying news from this story.

1. Simcoe Muskoka has so far reported 3 positive tests in individuals *with no known links* to the massive B.1.1.7 outbreak at Roberta Place LTC.

Two of those are linked to separate outbreaks of their own (a different LTC and a mental health hospital). Testing underway.

2. Of the 225 cases at Roberta Place, 100+ are confirmed or preliminary + for B.1.1.7.

42 household contacts of ppl linked to the outbreak are also COVID+. Public health unit is worried about keeping cases (which are all likely B.1.1.7) from rippling further into the community.

3. A case in Kingston area who tested positive for COVID "several weeks ago" was just discovered to be B.1.1.7. That person travelled to Simcoe Muskoka, but had not travelled internationally, according to the local health unit.

https://t.co/81h7PtyNx2

4. Overall, Public Health Ontario counts 47 B.1.1.7 cases as of yesterday -- these are only the ones confirmed thru full genome sequencing. Preliminary screening tests not included (yesterday's 99 in Simcoe Muskoka, for example).

Here's a breakdown by health unit courtesy PHO:

Summary of confirmed variant of concern (VOC) COVID-19 cases by public health unit for the lineage B.1.1.7, as entered by public health units in CCM

Public Health Unit Name	Cumulative case count up to January 26, 2021
Durham Region Health Department	3
Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health	1
Middlesex-London Health Unit	2
Ottawa Public Health	1
Peel Public Health	2
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit	9
Toronto Public Health	14
York Region Public Health	15
Total Ontario	**47**

Note: Caution should be taken when interpreting VOC data due to the nature of the sequencing strategy and delays between sample collection and sequencing. A confirmed VOC case is defined as a COVID-19 case in whom a designed VOC was detected by genome sequencing in their clinical SARS-CoV-2 positive specimen. Data corrections or updates can result in case records being removed and/or updated and may result in total differing from past publicly reported case counts.

Data Source: Public Health Case and Contact Management Solution (CCM), Coronavirus Rapid Entry System (CORES) database.

Side note: My story from 3 days ago (three years in COVID time) on why scientists say we more genomic sequencing and screening, faster turnaround, and better policies to stifle the spread of extra-contagious variants like B.1.1.7:

https://t.co/87Czw5uYRD)

5. Simcoe Muskoka's top public health official Dr. Charles Gardner, who is also on the province's public health measures table, said:

“If it isn’t spreading readily in our community now, it may very well do so in the near future."

@BogochIsaac: "The horse is out of the barn."

Gardner warned B.1.1.7 could quickly overwhelm dropping case numbers in Ontario, making school re-opening difficult & undermining vaccination efforts (especially combined with vaccine supply shortages).

So what do we do now?

The experts I have spoken to agree with this @bruce_arthur column: no one is *opposed* to border measures, but they will not stop the spread of B.1.1.7 alone. Too late for that.

Bogoch: “There’s no magic, right? We know how to control this."

https://t.co/0qSObJike5

My colleague @JacquesGallant reported on the possibility of restricting travel between provinces.

Dr. Gardner also spoke about restricting travel *inside* the province, between communities -- which he says would be controversial but worked in Australia.

https://t.co/0eViOe7ifT

We will likely get more positive tests for variants of concern in the coming days as the results of a PHO point-prevalence study trickle in: ALL ~2,500 COVID positive test samples from Jan 20 are being screened + sequenced for variants of concern.

Stay tuned.

Okay well it's been 10 minutes since I posted this, so obviously I already have two updates to report:

- Now 85 secondary contacts from Roberta Place (up from the 42). h/t @LapointeShaw
- Nine of York Region's 15 B.1.1.7 cases acquired in community:

https://t.co/tZWTewVFaR