



## COMMUNITY NOTICE

For Immediate Release:

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### INFORMATION ON COVID-19 VARIANTS

Due to community inquiry, the MCA Department of Health (DOH) would like to provide some information on the different strains of COVID-19 that are being reported in the news and various media outlets. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, the DOH has made every effort to keep the community informed on the latest developments. Concern about the new reported strains and the vaccine efficacy have been raised.

Variants are a mutation of the COVID-19 strain, which has impacts on public and clinical health; transmission and vaccine effectiveness are concerns. The COVID-19 variants have occurred, as expected, due to the virus circulating in different areas and populations. The more a virus circulates, the more opportunity it has to change/mutate.

There are 219 cases of the UK-variant of COVID-19 that have been reported in Ontario. Variant strains from South Africa and Brazil have also been identified. Evidence shows the three variants are more contagious and infectious. Early evidence in Ontario has shown the incubation period can be shorter, resulting in rapid transmission. Currently, there is ongoing research of the vaccine effectiveness of the COVID variants.

Ongoing research is being conducted to grasp the extent of the exact spread of the variants in Ontario. Efforts are ongoing to contain the variants in areas where it has not been detected. Despite the growing number of variants in Ontario, the COVID-19 vaccine is still highly recommended.

As it has been since the start of the pandemic, all efforts are being made to stop/slow the spread of the new variants of COVID-19, as the more contagious a variant of the COVID-19 virus is, the risk of overwhelming health systems becomes higher.

**The DOH is reminding community members that the best way to prevent COVID-19 is to continue with public health measures: wearing a mask in public, social distancing up to 6-feet, no social gatherings outside of your own household, washing and sanitizing hands on a regular basis, and only going out for essential needs.**