

Ontario creates task force for future vaccine distribution

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As we get closer to a vaccine for the COVID-19 virus, the Provincial government has created a task force for when the time comes.

The Ontario government announced on November 23 the Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force in preparation for a future vaccine.

The task force will be instructed to oversee the development and implementation of an immunization program, as well as ensuring timely and effective distribution of the vaccine to Ontarians.

To lead this task force, former Chief of Defence Staff for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and Commander of NATO-led forces in Afghanistan, Rick Hillier has been appointed by the Province as Chair.

With more than 35 years of leadership experience in various fields, the Province saw him as the ideal fit for the job.

"Having always believed that 'duty calls', the safe, secure and successful delivery of COVID-19 vaccines is a critical mission I'm honoured to accept for the people of Ontario," said General Hillier.

Added Premier Doug Ford: "We still have a long way to go, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. That's why I have asked General Hillier to lead this effort, because we need the best of the best for the monumental task at hand. I am confident he will bring the same disciplined leadership and military precision needed to execute one of the largest logistical undertakings our province has ever faced."

The task force will include government representation federally and provincially, as well as outside experts in different fields of operations and logistics. There is planned to be health and clinical domains as well as public health and immunization, ethics and information technology and data, the province claimed.

When a vaccine becomes available, the task force will be looking after the delivery, storage and distribution of the vaccines, as well as providing the necessary support for the health care partners with a "phased vaccination program" that prioritizes vulnerable residents and later immunization for the mass public.

They will also be advising clinical guidance on vaccine administration and surveillance of the vaccine, according to the province, as well as reporting on data with relevant and accurate information for administration, officials and the public.

Education and community outreach will be a large part to the task force to help communities across the province understand the vaccine and encourage vaccination.

"The fact that we are setting up this task force is a sign that we are making progress in the fight against COVID-19," Premier Ford.

Two companies have been on their way to providing effective protection shots, in which the province has begun early planning of a COVID-19 vaccine program with vaccines from both Pfizer and Moderna.

Moderna reported on November 12 that its vaccine has shown to be 94.5 per cent effective among continuing studies. Alongside Moderna, Pfizer has concluded the third phase of their study with a primary efficacy of 95 per cent.

Pfizer began their third clinical study in July and has had 43,661 participants with 41,135 who have received a second shot of the vaccine, stated the company.

The province stated that planning for the vaccine is underway with the help of provincial and federal partners, where updates will likely be provided at a later date.

"Our government continues to take all measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19 while planning for the availability of a safe and effective vaccine once it is ready," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "This task force will help chart a vital path forward in the development of an immunization plan that protects communities and keeps Ontarians safe."

For further information, visit [Ontario.ca](#).