



**For Immediate Release
February 22, 2021**

GTHA MAYORS AND CHAIRS COMMITTED TO SAFE REOPENING, WORKING TO AVOID FURTHER LOCKDOWNS

"Today, Mayors and Chairs from the 11 largest municipal governments across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area held their regular weekly meeting to discuss the ongoing response to COVID-19 across the region.

The Mayors and Chairs discussed their concerns about the continuing challenge posed by COVID-19, the variants and the possibility of a third wave. We support the safe reopening of schools to in-person learning that has been completed across the region and thank everyone involved in this effort to date including students, their families, and their teachers.

While some parts of the GTHA have started to reopen, others remain under lockdown and the province's Stay at Home order based on public health advice. The Mayors and Chairs support a cautious and safe reopening. We want to ensure that we keep the spread of the virus and the variants under control so that we avoid a third wave and ensure this lockdown is the last lockdown. We urge all residents to continue following the public health advice in their area and to avoid region hopping at this time. It was observed that the relaxation of remaining restrictions on outdoor winter recreational amenities might help prevent region hopping.

We also urge the Government of Ontario to work with us to ensure that as a transition to being more open takes place across the region, that we have in place measures needed to ensure its success including testing and other workplace related measures. The Mayors and Chairs would also welcome an increased public information campaign from the Province reminding people to shop smart, not to make it a family outing, and to continue to stay home as much as possible even in areas of increased reopening.

The Mayors and Chairs welcome the fact the Government of Canada announced the extension of several pandemic benefits. Extending the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit to four weeks from the previous two weeks will help. This is a good step in the right direction. Sick pay has been identified as a crucial issue and the Mayors and Chairs continue to call on both the provincial and federal governments to hammer out an even more effective solution for increased sick pay funding.

All GTHA municipalities are preparing to support the provincial and federal governments in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine once additional and substantial supply has arrived. This is one more example of the work municipalities are doing on the frontline to help the overall fight against COVID-19. The Mayors and Chairs seek assurance from the Government of Ontario that the provincial COVax registration and scheduling system will be up and running well ahead of the commencement of mass vaccinations. We encourage all residents to get vaccinated when they are eligible – this will be crucial to protecting people's health and in turn crucial to the successful rebuild of the GTHA economy."

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AURORA TOWN HALL