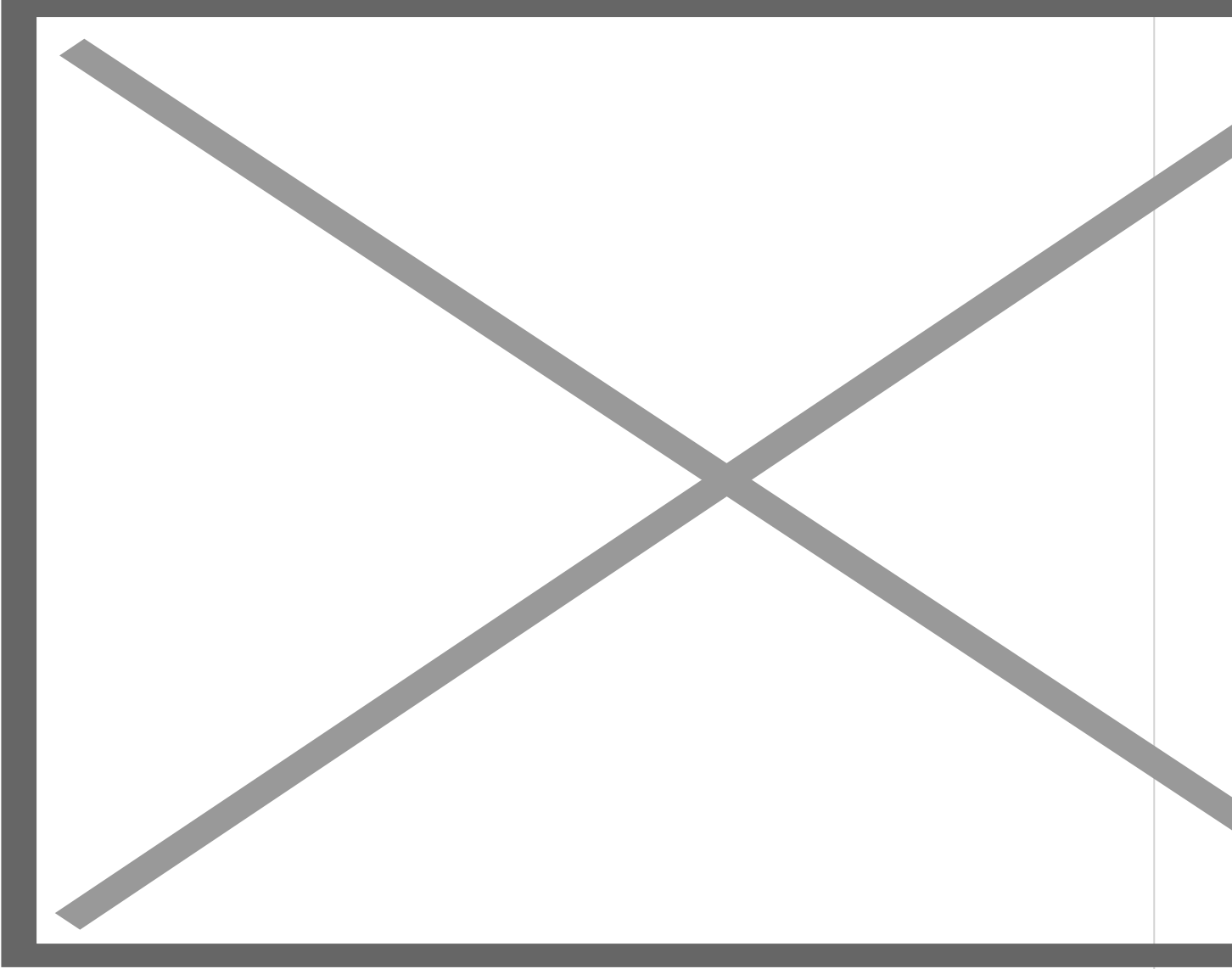


Canadian prime minister says country faces very serious third wave

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Canada is seeing rising hospitalisations, intensive care unit admissions, and the spread of more easily transmissible coronavirus variants, Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday [Photo: Blair Gable/Reuters]

Ottawa, April 7 (RHC)-- Canada is facing “a very serious third wave” of the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday, as the country’s most populous province is struggling to respond to rising infections and hospitalisations, and the rapid spread of coronavirus variants.

During a news conference in Ottawa, Trudeau warned that hospitalizations are increasing, intensive care units are filling up, and coronavirus variants are spreading. “Around the world, countries are facing a very serious third wave of this pandemic and right now so is Canada,” he said. “Even if the sun is shining and the weather is getting warmer, COVID-19 isn’t done with us yet.”

Canada has reported at least one million cases of COVID-19 and more than 23,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. A recent increase in cases and hospitalisations in several provinces, including the most populous, Ontario, and British Columbia on the west coast, has prompted calls for stricter public health measures to stem the spread of the virus.

“We do know that a lot of that is the variant[s], and it does seem like it is a more transmissible strain and it also seems that people do get sicker with some of these variants,” Dr Gerald Da Roza, head of medicine at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, BC, told CBC News.

Ontario has seen a surge in COVID-19 infections in recent weeks and imposed limited lockdown measures over the weekend. On Tuesday, it reported 3,065 new cases as the seven-day average of new infections reached 2,862.

The situation has renewed a push for the province to grant paid sick leave, as many workers deemed essential during the pandemic have been unable to take time off when sick, which advocates say is fuelling the spread of the virus.

Andre Picard, a health columnist at the Globe and Mail newspaper, said the latest modelling data estimates Ontario could see as many as 6,000 new COVID-19 infections daily – up from 2,500 now – and 800 ICU patients by the end of April.

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