

## Update for Partners

### COVID-19

March 25, 2020

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#### ***Message from the Medical Officer of Health***

On March 23, the Premier [ordered the closure of all non-essential businesses](#) as of March 24 at midnight for two weeks in order to slow the spread and impact of COVID-19. This action, which requires the closure of all non-essential businesses and establishments, will be enforced if it becomes necessary but non-essential businesses are being called on to do their part without enforcement. It is recognized that these closures will be difficult for local businesses and community members. But we also know that these closures and changes to business as usual are necessary to decrease close interactions with others, thereby helping to reduce the spread of illness in our communities. We all need to work together to ‘flatten the curve’.

**As much as possible, everyone needs to take steps to limit the number of people they come into close contact with, including those employed at [essential workplaces](#).** The COVID-19 virus is being transmitted in communities in Simcoe Muskoka. Safeguard yourself and others. Stay home. If you need to go out, ensure you maintain physical distance from others (2 metres/6 feet). Wash your hands frequently. Remain in self-isolation for 14 days if you are experiencing symptoms; have returned from travel outside of Canada; and/or are a contact of a confirmed case (you would be notified by the health unit). **The importance of these measures cannot be overstated at this critical time.** I encourage you to promote these messages to avoid the spread of disease in your own employees, workplaces, constituents and clients.

Information about preventing the spread of COVID-19 and resources to support you can be found at [www.smdhu.org/coronavirus](http://www.smdhu.org/coronavirus).

Dr. Charles Gardner  
Medical Officer of Health

## Current Situation (as of 10:00 on March 25, 2020)

### Local Situation – Simcoe Muskoka

There are 21 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 virus in Simcoe Muskoka residents, including six hospitalizations and two virus-related deaths. **Three of the cases are considered community acquired** (without a link to someone with confirmed COVID-19 or travel to an affected area). These numbers only reflect those who have been tested. There are likely many more people with the COVID-19 virus in Simcoe Muskoka in light of the evidence of increasing community transmission.

SMDHU's [COVID-19 HealthSTATS webpage](#) is live and provides daily weekday updates on the status of people with the virus within the region. In addition, the health unit holds a virtual media briefing with Dr. Gardner Monday-Friday at 1:00 p.m. You can also view SMDHU's [press releases](#) for more information.

### Provincial Situation – Ontario

There were 85 more people diagnosed with COVID-19 in Ontario yesterday, increasing the total confirmed cases in Ontario to 671. This includes eight people who have recovered and nine deaths. There are currently 10,489 people being investigated with lab results pending. A total of 35,635 people have been approved for testing.

For the most up-to-date information on the status of COVID-19 in Ontario see the [Province of Ontario website](#)

### National Situation – Canada

There are 2091 (up 583) confirmed cases of people with the COVID-19 virus in Canada and 24 (up 3) virus-related deaths.

At this time over half of people diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus were exposed to it in a community setting. This means that at this time over half of the people diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus in Canada have been exposed to the virus within the community.

For the most up-to-date information on the COVID-19 situation in Canada see the [Government of Canada website](#). A detailed [epidemiologic curve](#) is also available.

### Global Situation

For the most up-to-date information on the COVID-19 situation globally see: Daily [WHO Situation Report](#), [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control website](#), and downloadable [daily data on the global geographic distribution of COVID-19 virus](#) on an [interactive situation dashboard](#).

## Risk Assessment

- COVID-19 is a serious health threat, and the situation is evolving daily. The risk will vary between and within communities, but given the increasing number of cases in Canada, the risk to Canadians is considered **high**.
- **Community transmission is being experienced in Simcoe Muskoka**, meaning the source of the illness cannot be traced. As community transmission occurs we will not be able to test and confirm everyone who has the virus. In light of this, **physical distancing** is the one tool we have to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes of COVID-19 for Canadians:
  - aged 65 and over
    - It is important to note that although outcomes tend to be more severe in the older population, people of all ages can get COVID-19 and there are cases of younger people being hospitalized.
  - with compromised immune systems
  - with underlying medical conditions
- **Anyone who has new cold-like/respiratory symptoms (regardless of travel history), and has not been tested for COVID-19, is to self-isolate at home for 14 days, or until their symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer as per the [Public Health Agency of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html) at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>.**
- There are also increased risks for Canadians who have travelled or are travelling abroad. The Government of Canada currently advises avoiding all non-essential travel outside of Canada.
  - All people who are coming into Canada are required to self-isolate for 14 days, monitor for symptoms and practice prevention behaviours for everyone including physical distancing, washing hands frequently and coughing/sneezing into the bend of your arm.
- An enhanced interactive [self-assessment tool](#) is available from the Ontario Ministry of Health.
  - People who are experiencing symptoms but cannot be tested should isolate themselves until they have recovered.

## COVID-19 Planning and Response

### SMDHU Response

- SMDHU is implementing the Incident/Emergency Status Phase of [Infectious Disease Emergency Response Plan](#) and many health unit staff continue to be actively redeployed into other positions within the agency. This disruption to our everyday business means that it is not business as usual for the health unit and as a consequence certain health unit functions have been deferred or curtailed until our response to COVID-19 is over.
- SMDHU continues to experience a strong demand for information from the public, with a large number of calls and emails. Staff have been deployed to attempt to meet these demands. The SMDHU Health Connection line continues to have extended hours of

operation and a dedicated line to respond to calls and emails about COVID-19. Contact Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 5829 or via [email](#).

Extended hours of operation of Health Connection for March 23-30:

- Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- SMDHU continues to conduct surveillance (including the monitoring of flu-like symptom presentations in all local emergency departments) and communicate local surveillance data. Going forward our [COVID-19 HealthSTATS](#) pages will focus on the total picture of our community rather than individual cases (case counts, epidemiology, age ranges, and risk factors).
- As COVID-19 information and messages change and additional resources become available we continue to update our [public website](#), our [website for health professionals](#) and inform those who are staffing phone lines and email. We continue to share key messages on our social media platforms. We also hold a virtual media briefing with Dr. Gardner Mon-Fri at 1:00 p.m.
- Health sector partners continue to be updated as often as necessary with new information and/or updated guidance documents and resources through [HealthFAXs](#) and through easy access links on our [health professional portal](#). Guidance for specific sectors, workplaces and individuals are also posted on our [website](#).
- SMDHU will be involved in the opening of emergency child care centres from an IPAC and food safety perspective.

### Local Response

- In order to meet the growing needs of area residents with medical concerns related to COVID-19, dedicated [assessment centres](#) have been opened in Barrie, Collingwood, Orillia, Midland, Alliston and centres in Huntsville and Bracebridge are being planned. Information about where assessment centres are, when to attend and what to bring are available on the [SMDHU website](#).
- Municipalities are encouraged to be ready to activate emergency response plans. States of emergency have been declared by: County of Simcoe; City of Barrie; and Oro-Medonte.
- SMDHU is leading the coordination with provincial and local partners to receiving and distribute donations of PPE and other necessary medical supplies.

### Ontario Response

- The province announced the closure of all non-essential businesses and establishments which will be enforced if it becomes necessary.
- **[Public gatherings/events of over 50 people continue to be prohibited.](#)**
- Currently, the volume of testing has exceeded the capacity of the Ontario Public Health laboratory system and there is a significant lag in getting the results back.
  - The Ontario Public Health Laboratory is working with private and hospital laboratories to build up the province's capacity to do testing more quickly.

- Due to the limitations of testing the numbers communicated do not likely reflect current numbers of those who have the COVID-19 virus.
- The province is calling on all non-essential organizations and businesses who have available medical supplies to contact the government for them to acquire them. In addition to supplies the province is looking to businesses and organizations for solutions and ideas to help communities withstand the pandemic. Go to the [Ontario Together Portal](#) for more information.
- There are 58 COVID-19 assessment centres now running in the province.
- Ontario schools and child care facilities will remain closed indefinitely with education supports including TVO and online learning being explored for school-aged children. The province is working to open child care spaces to support families with children who work for essential services.
- Ontario is enhancing measures to keep staff, volunteers and residents in [long-term care homes safe](#).
- \$200 million in social service funding was announced to protect Ontario's most vulnerable populations with funding going to municipalities, food banks, homeless shelters and individuals.
- Ontario announced providing [electricity relief](#) to families, small businesses and farms for a 45-day period.
- Health Canada has released an FAQ document regarding Subsection 56(1) Class Exemption for Patients, Practitioners and Pharmacists Prescribing and Providing Controlled Substances in Canada during the Coronavirus Pandemic. It has been attached to today's Situation Report.
- Clarification around the Hospital Redeployment order (Regulation 74/20 under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act) can be found [here](#).

## Available Resources

- [Public Signage](#) available for: Physical Distancing (also known as social distancing), Washing your hands, Visitors
- Enhanced information for [employers and employees](#) and [resources for workplaces and partners](#) can be found on SMDHU webpages
- Stop the Spread [Business Information Line](#) Now Open at 1-888-444-3659
- An enhanced interactive [self-assessment tool](#) is available from the Ontario Ministry of Health.
- COVID-19 virtual assistant is now available on federal website (found at bottom right corner of [Government of Canada COVID-19 website](#))
- Updated guidance documents for various settings:
  - [Guidance for Personal Service Settings \(PSS\)](#)
  - [Guidance for Food Premises Best Practices Summary Sheet](#)
  - [Guidance for Independent Health Facilities](#)
  - [Guidance documents](#) for health sectors organizations
    - [Guidance for pharmacies](#)
    - [Guidance for Long-Term Care Homes](#)
      - [A checklist for Long-Term Care homes](#)

- [Guidance for Consumption and Treatment Services sites](#)
- Infection Prevention and Control ([IPAC recommendations](#)) for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for care of individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19
- Government of Canada [guidance documents](#) area available for: communities, businesses and health professionals.
- Many fact sheets including one on cleaning and disinfection in public settings are available on the [Public Health Ontario website](#)

### **Resources coming soon**

- Use of PPE for non-health care workers
- Guidance for Shelters, Funeral Homes, Child Care Services for Essential Workers, and direction regarding Migrant Workers

### ***Other Reliable sources of information***

- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) (OMOH)
- [Government of Canada](#) (GOC)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)
- [World Health Organization](#) (WHO)