

## Update for Partners

### COVID-19

March 27, 2020

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

**COVID-19 virus is being transmitted in communities in Simcoe Muskoka.** 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 working at [essential workplaces](#).** We understand business closures and changes to how business is conducted for those who remain open are difficult and I thank you for all you are doing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. If you remain open please follow public health guidance to keep both your employees and customers/clients safe.

Continue to 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 and/or are a contact of a confirmed case (you would be notified by the health unit). Additionally, the [Quarantine Act has been invoked](#) requiring all those who have returned from travel outside of Canada to quarantine themselves for 14 days or face potential penalties.

**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 amongst your own employees, workplaces, constituents and clients.

I am holding virtual media briefings on our Facebook page live Monday-Friday at 1:00 p.m. [www.facebook.com/simcoe.muskoka](http://www.facebook.com/simcoe.muskoka). They will also be uploaded to our [YouTube](#) channel with closed captioning. Local information about 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 27, 2020)

### Local Situation – Simcoe Muskoka

**Community transmission is being experienced in Simcoe Muskoka.** There are 33 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 virus in Simcoe Muskoka residents, including three virus-related deaths and 5 hospitalizations. **Eight of the cases are considered community acquired** (with no link to someone with confirmed COVID-19 or travel outside of Canada). 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. 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 835. This includes eight people who have recovered and 15 deaths. There are currently 10,965 people being investigated with lab results pending. A total of 38,550 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 4018 confirmed cases of people with the COVID-19 virus in Canada and 39 virus-related deaths. At this time in Canada, almost 60% of people diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus were exposed to it in a community setting, with no link to someone with confirmed COVID-19 or travel outside of Canada.

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

- **Community transmission is being experienced in Simcoe Muskoka**, meaning the source of the illness cannot be traced. As community transmission occurs we cannot test and confirm everyone who has the virus. In light of this, **physical distancing** is the best tool we have to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- COVID-19 continues to be a serious health threat with the risk to Canadians assessed as **high**. The risk will vary between and within communities.
- Anyone who develops cold-like/respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny nose, etc.) should self-isolate at home for 14 days. **If at 14 days, they don't have a fever and the symptoms are improving, they can come out of self-isolation.** If symptoms persist or worsen, they should seek assessment with their health care provider, Telehealth, assessment centre or emergency department as needed.
- People with mild symptoms generally do not require testing.
- 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
- 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 Vulnerable Populations for COVID-19 Response Interactive Map:** this interactive online map highlights vulnerable populations (e.g. seniors, persons living in low income) and places (e.g. long-term care homes, COVID-19 Assessment Centres, licenced child cares) in Simcoe Muskoka. This tool can be used for planning as part of COVID-19 pandemic response.
  - This will be accessible soon under the **Maps** section of our **HealthSTATS website**, but **can currently be accessed directly through this link**.

- SMDHU continues to conduct surveillance (including the monitoring of flu-like symptom presentations in all local emergency departments) and communicate local surveillance data, including for COVID-19. See our [COVID-19 HealthSTATS](#) page, which is updated daily
- 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 online information:
  - For [public](#)
  - For [healthcare professionals](#)
  - For [health sector partners](#)
  - For [workplaces and partners](#)
  - For [employers and employees](#)
- 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. through Facebook Live.
- SMDHU will be involved in the opening of emergency child care centres from an IPAC and food safety perspective.

## Local Response

- Ontario hospitals are calling on their communities for donations of unused and unopened (in factory packaging) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including N95 masks, procedure/surgical masks (ear loop or tie back), safety goggles, disposable fluid resistant gowns, disposable gloves (especially non-latex), and hand sanitizer.
  - **If you are a company, business or individual who can donate any of these items listed above, information about who to contact is found on SMDHU's [website](#).**
- Information about the assessment centres within the region is also available on the [SMDHU website](#).
- Municipalities are encouraged to be ready to activate emergency response plans.

## Ontario Response

- An [emergency order to close all non-essential businesses](#) was put in place at 11:59PM on March 24, 2020 and is being enforced when necessary.
- Questions about the Emergency Order closing non-essential business?
  - Municipalities: contact the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre ([PEOCDO01@ontario.ca](mailto:PEOCDO01@ontario.ca))
  - Businesses: contact Stop the Spread Business Information Line (1-888-444-3659), Monday to Sunday, from 8:30am – 5:00pm.
- **[Public gatherings/events of over 50 people continue to be prohibited.](#)**
- 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.
- The province is working to:
  - increase provincial lab testing capacity and reduce the backlog of tests
  - augment necessary medical supplies and equipment
  - support increased capacity at Telehealth by adding 100 registered nurses
  - support assessment of COVID-19 through dedicated assessment centres
  - support enhanced measures to keep staff, volunteers and residents of [long-term care homes safe](#)

## National Response

- The Government of Canada [announced an Emergency Order](#) under the Quarantine Act that requires any person entering Canada by air, sea or land to self-isolate for 14 days whether or not they have symptoms of COVID-19. All individuals permitted to enter Canada are subject to this Order, with the exception of certain persons who cross the border regularly to ensure the continued flow of goods and services, and those who provide essential services.

## Available Resources

- [Public Signage](#) available for: physical distancing (also known as social distancing), washing your hands, visitors
- 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 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](#)
- Public Health Ontario [fact sheets](#)

## 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)