



## Update for Partners

### COVID-19

March 13, 2020

[Message from the Medical Officer of Health](#)

[Current Situation \(as of 14:00 March 13\)](#)

[Risk Assessment](#)

[Public Health Planning and Response](#)

[Other Available Resources](#)

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

As many of you may already be aware we received notification of the region's first confirmed case of COVID-19 in a local resident who recently returned from Spain and Germany. The individual is self-isolating and recovering at home. We were informed of this in the early hours of March 12<sup>th</sup> and informed the public of this new development through a [press release](#) and media press conference at 1 p.m. on Thursday.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) made the assessment that the global COVID-19 outbreak can be characterized as a pandemic which is the "worldwide spread of a new disease". There are no other specific criteria for determining what is a pandemic or not (e.g. number of people infected, number of deaths). In light of this new characterization we continue to actively monitor the global outbreak of respiratory illness caused by COVID-19, as well as the evolving situation provincially and locally.

We will be shifting our communications to twice weekly updates as a means to support your information needs, planning, communications and access to resources. Previous updates can be found at [www.smdhu.org/coronavirus](http://www.smdhu.org/coronavirus).

Dr. Charles Gardner  
Medical Officer of Health

## **Current Situation** (as of 14:00 March 13, 2020)

**NEW** - As of March 13, 2020, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health is strongly advising the following to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19

- **Avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada;**
  - If you decide to travel outside of Canada with children, they will be required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon return.
- Immediately **\*suspend all large events or public gatherings** over 250 people
  - Including colleges and universities (immediately look at virtual options)
- **All licensed child care centers to actively screen** children, parents, staff and visitors for any symptoms and travel history that may be related to COVID-19 (based on current case definition)
- **All Ontarians to practice social distancing** as much as possible until further notice.

### **\*Large Events or Public Gatherings**

- Municipalities, workplaces, event organizers or planners should apply the recommendation of the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health of suspending all large events or public gatherings over 250 people
- All organizers must notify the health unit of any potential public gatherings or events so we can support the assessment of risk and assist in putting in place infection prevention and control measures to protect those in attendance.
  - The following document can assist with the risk assessment: [Risk-informed decision-making for mass gatherings during COVID-19 global outbreak](#)
  - Organizers who have questions about smaller gathering are encouraged to contact local public health.
- It is recommended that meetings and events be held virtually or postponed rather than in person.
- The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is co-hosting a joint COVID-19 Pandemic Preparedness Forum, along with the County of Simcoe and the District of Muskoka, as the agency, its partners and stakeholders continue planning for the potential arrival of widespread community transmission of the virus.
  - The forum, which takes place Monday March 16 ***via video and teleconference only***, includes a variety of stakeholders and partners from health, education and municipal sectors. A part of the discussion will be how the [Simcoe Muskoka interagency pandemic plan](#), which was updated in 2010 to support the County of Simcoe and the District of Muskoka in the event of an influenza pandemic. This can be adapted and utilized for coordinated planning response to COVID-19.

## Local Situation – Simcoe Muskoka

- There is one person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our region.
  - The person is a man in his 40s who recently returned from Spain and Germany. The man went to Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie for assessment and testing and is currently at home in self-isolation. All necessary infection and control measures for COVID-19 were taken by the hospital to ensure safety of staff and other patients.
  - The health unit is working closely with the individual to follow up on known contacts who may have potentially been exposed to the virus and possible exposure sites.
- We have heard locally of employers requesting employees gain medical clearance to return to work. We do not support employers requiring staff with no travel history to areas with a travel advisory and upper respiratory infections to be cleared by a physician before returning to work if their symptoms have resolved.
- Note that at times, the ability for the health care system to test may be exceeded by the demand. As per the province, COVID-19 testing at this time will only be available to the following groups. People who:
  - have symptoms and are a contact of a confirmed case(s), until community transmission is established
  - have been admitted to hospital with acute respiratory illness
  - are health care workers with acute respiratory illness
  - have acute respiratory illness who live in long term care homes and retirement homes
  - have acute respiratory illness who live in other institutions and as directed by the health unit
  - are health care workers as part of a health care institutional outbreaks and as directed by the health unit
  - are First Nation Community members living on-reserve with acute respiratory illness
- Travelers who have returned from a COVID-impacted area need to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of illness for 14 days. If within 14 days of returning, they have fever (over 38 degrees Celsius) and/or onset of (or exacerbation of chronic) cough, they are asked to **self-isolate at home until 24 hours after symptoms have resolved**. The impacted area\* is based on current epidemiology and [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Situation Report](#) which currently includes over 100 countries. At this time, such ill travelers as a group are not on the list of persons to be tested.

## Provincial Situation – Ontario

- For the most up-to-date information on the status of COVID-19 in Ontario see the [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) website it is updated daily at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
- As of 3:55 on March 12 the [Provincial Government announced](#) that Ontario schools have been ordered to remain closed from March 14 through to April 5, 2020.

## National Situation – Canada

- For up-to-date information on the situation in Canada see the [Government of Canada](#) (GOC) website.

## Global Situation

- For up-to-date information on the countries affected by COVID-19 see the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control website](#).
- [Daily data on the global geographic distribution of COVID-19 virus](#) is now downloadable and an [interactive situation dashboard](#) showing latest available global data on COVID-19 are available online.

## Risk Assessment

- WHO [Situation Report](#) states “If you are not in an area where COVID-19 is spreading or have not travelled from an area where COVID-19 is spreading or have not been in contact with an infected patient, your risk of infection is low”.
- Although the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) continues to assess the public health risk associated with 2019-nCoV as **low** for the general population in Canada this could change rapidly.
- Communities, organizations, businesses and families need to be prepared for potential disruption to normal life if the virus starts to infect people locally. Information and tips about how to prepare are posted on our [website](#).

## General population

- *Information about travel* is changing rapidly visit [travel.gc.ca](#) for the latest travel advice. Frequently consult the [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) and the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) to understand recommendations for travelers returning home for affected areas.
- *For precautionary measures* see our [pandemic planning webpage](#) and [COVID-19](#)

## ***Public Health Planning and Response***

### **SMDHU**

- At this time, many staff have been actively deployed. 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 are being assessed and either deferred or being curtailed until our response to COVID-19 is over.
- The SMDHU Health Connection line continues to respond to calls about COVID-19 and has extended hours.
- Ext 5829
  - Friday March 13<sup>th</sup> 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.
  - Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup> 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
  - Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 8 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](#).

### **Provincial**

The Ontario Ministry of Health has provided:

- an updated case definition based on the most up-to-date evidence
- [updated IPAC recommendations](#) for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for care of individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19;
- [guidance for active screening](#) of visitors to long term care homes
- fact sheets for: a) self-monitoring for symptoms, b) self-isolation, and c) guidance for caregivers, household members and close contacts are now available on the [Public Health Ontario website](#).

Public Health Ontario has provided:

- guidance in [English](#) and [French](#) for environmental cleaning for non-health care settings.

The Ministry of Health is doing the following:

- continuing to work with federal and local partners to support the remaining repatriated citizens under quarantine and those in self-isolation.
- working to increase capacity to reduce wait times on Telehealth;
- implementing sentinel testing of all hospital emergency rooms and people hospitalized with respiratory illness;
- working with local communities to set up assessment centers;

- involved in future scenario planning amongst provincial partners and stakeholders.

### **National**

- The Public Health Agency of Canada has developed guidance documents for health system partners
  - [Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) in Canada](#)

### **International**

The World Health Organization has recently:

- released [key considerations for planning of large mass gathering events](#)
- provided guidance to help protect children and schools from transmission of the COVID-19 virus. [Key messages and actions for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools.](#)
- provided [recommendations to reduce risk of transmission](#) from animals to humans.

### ***Other Available Resources***

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