

## COVID-19 Update for Partners

September 24, 2020

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### Key messages from Dr. Gardner, MOH

#### 1. Reduction in sizes allowed for social gatherings in unregulated settings

- There is a need to curb big gatherings where little or no precautions are taking place to prevent transmission (e.g. house/backyard parties) both indoors, with a limit of 10, and outdoors, with a limit of 25.
- Across the province and locally there are growing transmission rates from “close contacts” meaning people are having close interactions without wearing a mask with those outside of their immediate household and social circle.
- Our best defense to prevent the spread and protect others is to redouble our efforts, shrink our circle of close contacts.

#### 2. Businesses, municipalities and organizations must protect employees, clients, public

- In accordance with Simcoe Muskoka District Health Units (SMDHU) instructions on July 15th, all employers/persons responsible for businesses or organizations should, to the fullest extent possible, ensure effective measures are in place to maintain physical distancing amongst all employees and clients. That includes:
  - Municipal offices and businesses who are holding the fort with their remote office and safe office practices need to continue to do so. Again that limiting of interactions wherever possible is important to reduce the spread.
  - At businesses where employees are not able to work at home ensuring all individuals wear face coverings when physical distancing is challenging or not possible, and that includes staff.
  - Ensure worksite screening practices are in place for employees and members of the public.
  - Require that anyone who is ill to stay home, take the self-assessment test (linked to our website) and if warranted, get tested.
  - Cohorting staff where possible for staff who work closely together in remaining as a team during breaks, meetings or entering and leaving the building, and limiting interactions with others as much as possible.

- Promote excellent hygiene practices including hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Considerations for temporary (temp) agencies and employers who use them for staffing:
  - Employers should ensure that all employees, including temporary staffing agency workers are screened daily prior to commencing work in your business/organization using the provincial screening tool (at a minimum). Active screening (where screening is conducted by or reported to the employer) is preferred as a more protective approach than passive screening (where no reporting is required). Anyone failing the provincial screening tool should not attend the workplace; they should self-isolate at home and seek testing. Contact information (name, address, email, telephone number) for each employee should be on file and retrievable by the temporary staffing agency and the business/organization employing the staff.
  - Employers should require that the temporary staffing agency screen employees prior to travelling to the workplace. As for all employees, temporary staffing agency employees should also be screened upon arrival to the workplace (or provide proof of screening). In some instances, temporary staffing agencies will transport employees in groups and therefore, employees who fail the screening should be restricted from travelling.
  - When temporary staffing agency staff are provided with group transportation, there should be appropriate preventive measures in place during transit, including physical distancing (which may thereby reduce vehicle capacity) and use of face coverings. Further consultation on requirements can be considered through the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development or the local Public Health Unit.

### **3. Flu season will soon be upon us**

- You can protect yourself from seasonal flu by getting the flu shot.
- The flu shot has been shown to reduce the number of doctor visits, hospitalizations and deaths related to influenza. Flu shots are the best defense for you to protect yourself, your family and those you care for.

### **4. Testing demands and changes to testing at assessment centres**

- To address the high demand for testing, the provincial health table announced it is [recommending changes to the testing](#) guidelines to prioritize testing at assessment centres to those who are at the greatest risk, while shifting away from untargeted asymptomatic testing.
- If you are worried about having COVID-19, but do not have symptoms and have not been exposed to anyone who is infected, you should not be going for testing. Indiscriminate testing is not sustainable, especially as we enter into cold and flu season. Only seek testing at [assessment centres](#) if you:
  - Are showing COVID-19 symptoms;
  - Have been exposed to a confirmed case of the virus, as informed by your public health unit or exposure notification through the COVID Alert app;
  - Are a resident or work in a setting that has a COVID-19 outbreak, as identified and informed by your local public health unit; or
  - Are eligible for testing as part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care.
- **Starting on September 25**, you can get tested for COVID-19 at select pharmacies if you are not showing symptoms and by appointment only. The Shoppers Drug Mart in Huntsville is one of the 60 identified pharmacies.

5. **Reminder: Our [Return to School webpages](#) have the information you are looking for**

- The Return to School pages on our website have answers to the questions you are asking including links to the school boards in our region so parents can check on the status of cases in schools on the COVID-Advisory page on each school board site.
- We will be posting outbreaks only on our site, not individual cases where the source of infection is not from a school setting.

Previous media briefings can be found on the [SMDHU Facebook page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### **Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of Sept 24, 2020, 13:00)**

<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Recovered</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
842	87	714	38
<b>Highlights:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the last day, there have been seven new cases, five additional recovered cases, no new hospitalizations and no additional deaths.</li><li>• This week, to date, we have had 42 confirmed cases. Last week there were a total of 52 confirmed cases, which is the second highest weekly number of cases since the pandemic began.</li><li>• So far in September we have 134 confirmed cases, more than July and August combined.</li><li>• There are currently five schools in the region with cases with no outbreaks declared.</li><li>• Almost 60% of current active cases are in people under 35 years of age, including 50% between 18-34 years of age.</li><li>• The percent positivity rate among adult males 30 -59 years of age is approximately double the rate of adult females of the same age group.</li><li>• Local testing rates remain lower than the provincial rate with 135 tests per 10,000 population in Simcoe County and 109 tests per 10,000 population in the District of Muskoka.</li><li>• The District of Muskoka has seen more cases so far in September than from May through August. There are currently 16 known active cases in the District.</li><li>• There are three ongoing outbreaks, two in <a href="#">long-term care homes</a> and one in a retirement home.</li></ul> <p>SMDHU <a href="#">COVID-19 HealthSTATS page</a> and the <a href="#">COVID-19 Case Explorer</a></p>			

### **Local Media Updates (September 17-23, 2020)**

- COVID testing site to expand into former police HQ in the 'very near future' ([article](#))
- Fewer low-cost rabies clinics across the county due to COVID-19 this year: SMDHU ([article](#))
- Huntsville's Spruce Glen Public School confirms COVID-19 case ([article](#))
- YOU ASKED: Does Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP think classrooms are safe? ([article](#))
- 'Adapt as much as you can': How COVID-19 has changed addiction services, outreach at CMHA's Simcoe County branch ([article](#))
- Positive case of COVID reported at Bear Creek ([article](#))
- COVID-19 case confirmed at Barrie Catholic school ([article](#))
- 'School will remain open': COVID-19 case confirmed at Father F.X. O'Reilly Catholic School in Tottenham ([article](#))
- Penetanguishene parents go to court over sending sons to school during pandemic ([article](#))
- 'We are making real progress': How COVID-19 has hindered, but not halted, Barrie's response to opioid crisis ([article](#))

- Midwifery services, at-home birth on the rise in Alliston ([article](#))
- Muskoka says safety is key as province launches child care COVID-19 tracker ([article](#))
- Amid COVID-19 spike, health unit urges citizens to be vigilant ([article](#))
- Fall restructuring, remote learning ramping up at both boards ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status			
Ontario (As of September 24, 2020, 10:30)			
Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
48,496	3,774	41,886	2,836
<b>Highlights:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been a steady week-to-week increase in cases and outbreaks since mid-August.</li> <li>• In the last day there has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ An increase of 409 confirmed cases (22.1% increase)</li> <li>○ One new death</li> <li>○ An increase of 286 resolved cases</li> </ul> </li> <li>• For the last reporting week of September 13-19, the rate of disease among all age groups has been trending up with the sharpest increase in those 20-39 years of age (30 cases per 100,000 versus 17.8 cases per 100,000 in the previous week).</li> <li>• Of active cases, those aged under 40 years of age currently represent 67% of all active cases.</li> <li>• Non-congregate settings account for almost 70% of ongoing outbreaks, with a large number occurring in workplaces (60%), compared to child care centres (14%) and schools (&lt;1%)</li> <li>• There are currently 88 people hospitalized, with 27 in the ICU including 11 on a ventilator.</li> <li>• There are currently 57 ongoing outbreaks in health care facilities in Ontario (long-term care homes = 30, retirement homes = 23, hospitals = 4).</li> </ul> <p>For more provincial data see: <a href="#">Province of Ontario COVID-19 case data</a> and <a href="#">Public Health Ontario Data Tool, Public Health Ontario Daily Epidemiologic Summary, Public Health Ontario Weekly Epidemiologic Summaries</a></p>			
Canada (As of September 24, 2020 at 19:00 EDT)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
149,094	11,138	128,707	9,249
<b>Highlights:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was an increase of 1,341 new cases reported in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ QC (582), ON (409), AB (158), BC (148), MB (37), SK (5) and NB (2)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In the last day, six new deaths were reported in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BC (2), QC (1), ON (1), AB (1) and MN (1)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In the last reporting week of September 6-12, the number of new cases increased by 22%</li> <li>• Cases identified in schools and child care centres have increased since August and have continued to increase in September; however, they, in most cases, represent one case and do not reflect transmission within the school setting.</li> <li>• Most cases in the last reporting week were exposed to an unknown source of COVID-19 with no cases related to international exposure.</li> <li>• Incidence rates in those 20-39 years of age continue to be consistently higher compared to all other age groups. In the last reporting week, this group represented 64% of all cases.</li> <li>• Weekly testing rates remained high for the last reporting week with over 47,000 people tested every day. The current percent positivity is 1.4%.</li> </ul> <p>National <a href="#">daily epidemiology updates</a>; National <a href="#">weekly epidemiology report</a></p>			

<b>Global</b> (As of September 24, 2020 at 10:52 CEST)	
<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	<b>Confirmed Deaths</b>
31,664,104	972,221
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the exception of the African region, all (World Health Organization) WHO regions saw an increase in weekly case incidence from September 14-20. There has been rapid growth in South-East Asian countries in recent weeks.</li> <li>From September 14-20, the highest number of cases were reported since the beginning of the pandemic, representing a 6% increase in cases from the previous week. This increase in cases did not translate into an increase in deaths. In fact there was a 10% decrease in deaths in the week of September 14-20, compared to the previous week.</li> <li>In the last week, India, USA, Brazil, Argentina and France had the most new cases and India, USA, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina had the most new deaths.</li> <li>Yesterday, 246,856 new cases and 4,525 new deaths were reported around the world, with the highest number of new cases in India, USA, Brazil, Argentina and France and the highest number of deaths in India, Brazil, USA, Mexico and Argentina.</li> <li>The Region of the Americas accounts for 50% of all reported cases and 55% of deaths.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard</a>; Weekly Epidemiological Update (<a href="#">September 21</a>); <a href="#">Previous Situation Reports</a></p>	

## Provincial, National and Global Updates

### **Provincial Updates** (since Sept 16, 2020 Partner Update)

#### The Ontario government:

- Invests in expanding COVID-19 testing and contact tracing ([news release](#))
- Launches largest flu immunization campaign in province's history ([news release](#))
- Expands COVID-19 testing to pharmacies ([news release](#)) ([backgrounder](#))
- Set to employ the largest number of labour inspectors in provincial history ([news release](#))
- Ontario limits the size of unmonitored and private social gatherings across entire province ([news release](#))
- Presses Ottawa to increase share of health funding ([news release](#))
- Introduces legislation to freeze residential rent in 2021 ([news release](#))
- Presses Ottawa to increase funding for Ontario health care and Infrastructure ([news release](#))

#### Other Provincial News:

- How Ontario could slow its growth in COVID-19 cases ([article](#))
- Ontario to begin COVID-19 testing in pharmacies starting Friday amid uptick in cases ([article](#))
- Ontario's new COVID-19 cases surge to highest level in more than three months ([article](#))
- Ontario's fall preparedness plan coming 'this week': Ford ([article](#))
- Pediatricians issue urgent call for help to get flu shot to more people this fall ([article](#))
- Hospitalizations, deaths will follow Ontario's COVID-19 surge ([article](#))
- 1<sup>st</sup> elementary school in Ontario closes after students, staff test positive for COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Ontario not acting on calls to improve infection control in long-term care facilities ([article](#))
- Some Ontario special-ed teachers must teach students online and in person ([article](#))
- Why Ontario's COVID-19 spike has yet to prompt another lockdown ([article](#))
- 'Kind of inevitable': Western University students react to COVID-19 outbreaks ([article](#))
- Ontario and Quebec schools shut down due to COVID-19 outbreaks ([article](#))

- Ontario families living in more racialized neighbourhoods less likely to send children back into classroom ([article](#))

### ***National Updates*** (since Sept 16, 2020 Partner Update)

#### The Government of Canada:

- Introduces legislation to support Canadians through Recovery Benefits and extend access to funds for emergency measures ([news release](#))
- Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada: [September 24, 2020](#), [September 23, 2020](#), [September 21, 2020](#), [September 20, 2020](#), [September 19, 2020](#), [September 18, 2020](#), [September 17, 2020](#)
- Signed new agreements to secure additional vaccine candidate and treatment for COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Encourages Indigenous participation in its response to COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Latest COVID-19 research investment supports knowledge exchange on social, cultural and economic impact of COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Released COVID-19 update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Highlights support for safer drug supply projects in Ontario ([news release](#))

#### Other National News:

- COVID-19: Trudeau to address nation Wednesday night to warn of situation's urgency ([article](#))
- New lockdowns possible if Canada's COVID-19 surge continues: health officials ([video](#))
- Canada 'at a crossroads': COVID-19 will keep spreading if behaviours don't change, Tam says ([article](#))
- Coronavirus numbers are surging in Canada. But who's getting sick and why? ([article](#))
- Majority of Canadians say wearing a mask during coronavirus pandemic is a civic duty: poll ([article](#))
- 'A bit unnerving' COVID-19 survivors worried about future consequences ([article](#))
- How COVID-19 worsens Canada's digital divide ([article](#))
- We looked at every confirmed COVID-19 case in Canada. Here's what we found ([article](#))
- Provinces reconsider keeping kids with runny nose out of the class during pandemic ([video](#))
- With CERB winding down next week, what will the transition to EI mean for Canadians ([video](#))
- Many Canadian snowbirds debate winter plans amid COVID-19 pandemic ([article](#))
- Back to school means back to stress and anxiety for grandparents during coronavirus pandemic ([article](#))
- Test reset: Why experts say you shouldn't show up for COVID testing if you are asymptomatic ([article](#))
- Some renters fear they'll be living on the streets as evictions bans, CERB come to end ([article](#))
- COVID-19 measures might have led to decline in other infectious illnesses ([article](#))
- Is heat needed to clean reusable masks? Your COVID questions answered ([article](#))
- Why can't we just get tested instead of isolating after international travel? COVID-19 questions answered ([article](#))
- What StatsCan learned by asking 35,000 Canadians about pandemic discrimination ([article](#))
- Long lines for COVID-19 tests reported across Canada; feds announce more funding ([article](#))
- Blood samples from pregnant women in Canada will be studied for COVID-19 antibodies ([article](#))
- As COVID-19 cases grow again across Canada, three quarters (75%) support shutting down most businesses if there is a second wave ([article](#))
- As demand for virus testing spikes, officials look for new methods ([article](#))
- Students call for extension as six-month freeze on federal loan payments nears its end ([article](#))
- Partial closure of Canada-U.S. border extended until at least Oct. 21 ([article](#))



- Design of post-CERB benefits could change as COVID-19 pandemic shifts course, Qualtrough says ([article](#))

### **International Updates** (since Sept 16, 2020 Partner Update)

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Noted that there will be no zero risk in reopening of schools, and the question for policymakers and public health and education officials is how to prevent clusters from turning into community transmission. New [guidance on school-related public health measures](#) were published.
- Released a slide deck on [‘What we know about the long-term effects of COVID-19’](#).
- Is expanding access to online learning for COVID-19 through its open learning platform for health emergencies, [OpenWHO.org](#). WHO online course have seen over 4.3 million course enrollments in the 128 courses offered (in 40 languages) with 1.1 million certificates being issued.
- Has developed a [comprehensive tabletop exercise \(SimEx\) packages](#) to support COVID-19 preparedness.
- Issued a [joint statement](#) with the UN, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNAIDS, ITU, UN Global Pulse and IFRC Managing the COVID-19 infodemic: Promoting healthy behaviours and mitigating the harm from misinformation and disinformation.
- Shared three key messages during the [75<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly](#):
  1. Equitable access to COVID-19 tools by supporting [Access to the COVID-19 Tools ACT Accelerator](#).
  2. Maintain momentum towards achieving [Sustainable Development Goals](#).
  3. Prepare for the next pandemic now using five urgent actions outlined in the [report](#) from the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board.

## SMDHU Resources

- SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and the [COVID-19 Case Explorer](#).
- [SMDHU Vulnerable Populations for COVID-19 Response Interactive Map](#) highlights vulnerable populations in Simcoe Muskoka.
- Current COVID-19 information is available on our [website](#). Updates have been made to:
  - **NEW** [Main COVID page](#): *Effective September 21, 2020* - The Government of Ontario announced the new limit on the number of people allowed to attend unmonitored private social gatherings across the province:
    - 10 people at an indoor event or gathering (previous limit of 50);
    - 25 people at an outdoor event or gathering (previous limit of 100);
    - Indoor and outdoor events and gatherings cannot be merged together. Gatherings of 35 (25 outdoors and 10 indoors) are not permitted. Unmonitored and private social gatherings include functions, parties, dinners, gatherings, BBQs or wedding receptions held in private residences, backyards, parks and other recreational areas.
  - **UPDATED:** [Complaints about gatherings](#)
  - **UPDATED:** [COVID-19 Assessment Centres and Testing](#)
    - [Alliston](#) New Hours of Operation at Stevenson Memorial Hospital
      - 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (open until 4:00 p.m. as of Monday, Sept 21).
    - [Barrie](#) New COVID-19 online swab testing booking
      - Our COVID-19 drive-thru testing centre now allows you to book your own appointment online.
      - Complete the [online form](#) with your name, health card number and date of birth.

- Once you submit the form, you will receive an email with instructions about your appointment. To make more than one appointment, you will be required to complete a new form for every swab test.
  - To coordinate multiple individuals coming at the same time, please call the clinic directly (705-797-3120) to book your appointments.
  - Same-day appointments are NOT available using the online booking option. Please call the clinic for same-day appointments
  - SMDHU Health Connection responds to calls and emails about COVID-19. Contact Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 5829 or via [email](#).
- Health Connection Hours:**
- Monday-Friday - 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### Credible Sources of Information

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