

COVID-19 Update for Partners

October 14, 2020

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Key messages from Dr. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

1. Support for Simcoe Manor during outbreak

I would like to acknowledge the leadership and support that we have obtained from Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH), as well as the ongoing dedication of Simcoe County and the staff of Simcoe Manor, the assistance of Stevenson Memorial Hospital, and the support of the Central Region of Ontario Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care. I would also acknowledge the ongoing work of my own staff, and of Public Health Ontario (PHO).

Since the beginning of this outbreak the County has implemented extensive safety measures and outbreak protocols, including: Cancellation of visits (with the exception of those designated as compassionate visitors), rigorous screening, ensuring that residents are all safely quarantined in their rooms where they are served meals and monitored closely, increased PPE and sanitization, cohorting of staff to designated units, enhanced medical on-site assessments, heightened nutritional care, and other strict outbreak protocols.

The County has also worked hard to communicate with staff, families, residents, and the public to ensure they are keeping everyone informed and providing up-to-date information regarding the status of the outbreak and the procedures that have been put in place. However, additional support from partners was needed, which resulted in this collaboration and an aggressive response. Over the weekend an RVH “Rapid Response Team” was deployed to Simcoe Manor and is now working closely with the County of Simcoe and the health unit to take further action.

As well, an Emergency Operations Centre, jointly led by RVH and the County of Simcoe, has been convened and an action plan is being developed to further ensure resident and staff safety.

2. COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard is now live

The purpose of the [COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#) is three-fold:

- To provide SMDHU with an ‘at a glance’ view of the COVID-19 situation in Simcoe Muskoka for local monitoring and informing reopening decisions.

- To provide the public with a general sense of the status of COVID-19 and its transmission in our local community.
- To provide stakeholders and community partners with information they can use to determine the need and timing for ramping up/down of their activities.
- The COVID-19 Monitoring Indicators in Simcoe Muskoka are grounded in the provincial Framework for Reopening our Province and are presented across four domains:
 - Virus Spread and Containment
 - Laboratory Testing
 - Health System Capacity and
 - Public Health System Capacity
- Domain-level scores are reviewed as the data are updated to provide an overall status assessment of COVID-19 in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka.
- The primary objectives of this dashboard are to support the active monitoring of local COVID-19 activity, and to support local decision making related to public health restrictions in response to COVID-19 disease activity.
- The data will be updated at least weekly, unless specified on the dashboard in future as more frequently updated for certain indicators.
- The current overall status of the COVID-19 pandemic in our area is **YELLOW** (needs attention)
 - Virus spread and Containment: **yellow**
 - Laboratory Testing: **red**
 - Health System Capacity: **yellow**
 - Public Health System Capacity: **red**
 - More than 90% of new positive COVID-19 cases are reached by our investigators within one day of being reported to the health unit; however, the percentage of high risk contacts reached within one day was below 80% for the first time since August.

3. PCR testing

We have had a questions about the accuracy of PCR testing, specifically that PCR testing cycles in Ontario are set at 38-45 which has been regarded as too sensitive by the medical community and should not be more than 30. The nasal swab testing for COVID-19 is pretty accurate generally. But, just like any medical test, it is not perfect. It is important to only get tested if it is indicated, so using the provincial self-assessment tool is helpful. If you get tested when it is not indicated (e.g. no symptoms and have not been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or have not been recommended to be tested by public health), there is a higher chance that the test may be inaccurate and be a false positive (i.e. you are not infected but the test falsely says positive).

Testing is for those who 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; or are a resident or work in a setting that has a COVID-19 outbreak, as identified and informed by your local public health unit.

4. Cloth masks

We have had a question regarding the statement we made in our Section 22 class order that cloth masks are not PPE. This has been confusing for some, who are wondering if this means that they shouldn't be wearing cloth masks as protection. We have provided information about the difference between stopping and reducing transmission.

- "Close contact" means a person who, within the past 14 days, has had a high risk exposure to a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case. For example, a person who: Lived with or otherwise had close, unprotected and prolonged contact (e.g. within 2 metres (6 feet) for more than 15

minutes) with a confirmed case of COVID-19 during their period of communicability (infectiousness).

- “Unprotected” means without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Appropriate PPE is using both medical-grade surgical/procedural mask and protective eyewear. A non-medical mask or face covering is not PPE.
- A non-medical mask or face covering that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensures a barrier that limits the spread of respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk. While they are not PPE, they do offer some protection by reducing the possible transmission from you to others, and it’s a valuable tool to have in place, particularly when you cannot physically distance.

5. New section on main COVID-19 webpage: I have been exposed to COVID-19

We have a new section on our main COVID-19 webpage “[I have been exposed to COVID-19](#).” Contact tracing is used as an effective tool to slow and control the spread of COVID-19. There are a variety of situations in which someone may be exposed to a person who has recently tested positive for COVID-19. If you have been identified as a close contact, and have been informed by public health or by someone in your life who has tested positive there are a number of steps to stop the spread of COVID-19. This new section has full information on what to do if you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

6. Halloween

Key messages:

- Stay home if feeling ill or if you have mild symptoms.
- Only go out with members of your direct household.
- Only trick-or-treat outside.
- Both trick-or-treaters and people handing out candy should wear a face covering.
- A costume mask is not a substitute for a face covering and should not be worn over a face covering as it may make it difficult to breathe.
- Consider building your face covering into your, or your child’s, costume.
- Do not congregate or linger at doorsteps. Line up two metres (6 feet) apart if waiting.
- Avoid high-touch surfaces and objects.
- Whether collecting or handing out treats, wash your hands often and thoroughly or use hand sanitizer.
- Do not leave treats in a bucket or bowl for children to grab.
- Consider using tongs, or other similar tools to hand out treats.

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

Simcoe Muskoka COVID-19 Case Status (As of Oct 14, 2020, 13:00)

Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
1099	137	915	42
Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID-19 Alert Notice: We are only two weeks into October and Simcoe Muskoka numbers of COVID-19 cases have already surpassed case counts of every previous month of the pandemic with the exception of April (195). Last week was also record-breaking with 134 new cases			

reported to public health from October 4 to October 10 - the most cases reported in a single week since the onset of the pandemic (more than doubling last week's total cases reported).

- In the last 14 days, there have been 202 cases of COVID-19 reported in Simcoe Muskoka.
- In the last day there have been 18 new cases, no new deaths and 15 recoveries reported.
- There are currently 6 ongoing outbreaks in Simcoe Muskoka, three in long-term care and three workplace outbreaks.
- There have been 19 cases reported in schools with no outbreaks declared to date.
- Cases from last week were: 60% male, younger in age (under 45), and 50% were acquired via close contact with a case. This information highlights the change of the pandemic in our area compared to the week of May 3 when 59% of cases were female, 39% of cases were 65+ years of age, and most cases were related to institutional outbreaks.
- Another difference important to highlight is that percent positivity is still much lower now than earlier in the pandemic when testing capacity was more limited.
- The moving average of the effective reproduction number (Rt) has been above 1 since late August and was above 1.2 since late September up until a few days ago.
- The percent positivity of COVID-19 tests is now above 1% for the first time since May and lab turn-around times are not close to meeting the goals.

SMDHU [COVID-19 HealthSTATS page](#) and the [COVID-19 Case Explorer](#)

Local Media Updates (October 8-14, 2020)

- New management ordered at Beeton long-term care home ([news release](#))
- Province appoints RVH to temporarily manage Simcoe Manor amid COVID-19 outbreak ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka schools impacted by COVID-19 ([article](#))
- County's warden, deputy warden and committee elections could move online ([article](#))
- Community Foundation has \$50,000 in grant money for local charities ([article](#))
- Innisfil man who battled COVID-19 in June still has symptoms ([article](#))
- Charges laid after two gatherings violate COVID-19 restrictions ([article](#))
- Praise for health link as Muskoka family escapes 'nearly impossible' COVID-19 situation ([article](#))
- 'Don't succumb to pandemic fatigue': Huntsville nurse on COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Follow advice, rules are key to curb COVID transmission, says Gardner ([article](#))
- Those in Simcoe-Muskoka flouting self-isolation requirements face \$5,000 a day fine ([article](#))
- Enrolment down at elementary schools amid pandemic concerns ([article](#))
- A grateful Youth Haven is holding their own seven months into pandemic ([article](#))
- We can't let our guard down on COVID, warns Midland mayor ([article](#))
- Midland councilor avoids discipline over hosting gatherings during pandemic ([article](#))
- Muskoka hospitals reach \$2.8M deficit as COVID-19 costs mount in 2020 ([article](#))
- Dr. Gardner issues orders to enforce self-isolation rules ([article](#))
- Simcoe Muskoka health unit can't keep up with contact tracing ([article](#))

Provincial, National and Global COVID-19 Case Status

Ontario (As of October 14, 2020, 10:30)			
Total cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
61,413	5,884	52,512	3,017
Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last day there has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An increase of 721 confirmed cases ○ An increase of 783 resolved cases. 			

- On October 9, Ontario saw the highest number of daily cases since the pandemic began (939).
- The highest rates of COVID-19 are occurring in neighbourhoods with the most diverse populations, located primarily in Toronto, Peel Region and Ottawa.
- There are currently 231 people hospitalized, with 64 in the ICU including 35 on a ventilator.
- There are currently 118 ongoing outbreaks in health care facilities in Ontario (long-term care homes = 63, retirement homes = 45, hospitals = 10).

For more provincial data see: [Province of Ontario COVID-19 case data](#) and [Public Health Ontario Data Tool, Public Health Ontario Daily Epidemiologic Summary, Public Health Ontario Weekly Epidemiologic Summaries](#)

Canada (As of Oct. 13, 2020 at 19:00 EDT)			
Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered	Deaths
186,881	19,741 (10.6%)	157,486 (84.3%)	9,654 (5.2%)

Highlights:

- As of October 13th, there were 4,042 new cases reported in:
 - ON (1553), QC (815), AB (961), BC (549), MB (124), SK (34) and NB (6)
- As of October 13th, 27 new deaths were reported in:
 - ON (12), QC (5), BC (5), AB (4), and MB (1)

The following are national highlights from the last published reporting week of Sept. 27- Oct. 3:

- The number of new cases increased by almost 50% compared to the previous week with 12,800 new cases, averaging 1,829 new cases reported daily.
- Hospitalizations and deaths increased in this reporting week, with a 38% increase in hospitalizations and 86 new deaths (averaging 12 new deaths reported daily, up from 7 in the previous reporting week).
- Since mid-September, testing has increased substantially, with a daily average of over 70,000 people tested for COVID-19.
- 2.5% of tests were positive (a 0.8% increase from the previous reporting week).
- A gradually increasing trend in incidence rates was seen through August and September in all age groups.
- 60% of all cases this reporting week were in people under 40 years of age, with cases in adult age groups under 40 consistently higher than all other age groups.
- According to forecasting, between 188,150 to 197,830 cumulative cases and 9,690 to 9,800 cumulative deaths are expected by October 17, 2020.

National [daily epidemiology updates](#); [National weekly epidemiology report](#)

Global (As of October 14, 2020 at 11:07 CEST)	
Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths
37,888,384	1,081,868

- The highest number of cases reported so far in a single week occurred in the last reporting week of October 4-11 with all global regions showing an increase in cases except the South-East Asia Region.
- Yesterday, 271,026 new cases COVID-19 and 4,102 new deaths were reported around the world, with the highest number of new cases in India, USA, UK, Russia and Argentina and the highest number of deaths in India, USA, Argentina, Iran and Russia.
- In the last week, India, USA, Brazil, France and the UK had the most new cases and India, USA, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina had the most new deaths.
- Nearly half of all cases (48%) and deaths (55%) have been reported in the Region of the Americas, with the USA, Brazil and Argentina accounting for the highest numbers of cases and deaths in the region.

- In the last reporting week the USA reported the largest increase in new cases since early August with 10 of 50 states reporting their highest one-day increase in new cases and 3 states reporting their highest one-day increase in deaths.
[WHO COVID-19 Disease Dashboard](#);
Weekly Epidemiological Update ([October 11](#)); [Previous Situation Reports](#)

Provincial, National and Global Updates

Provincial Updates (since Oct. 7, 2020 Partner Update)

The Ontario government:

- Continues to support restaurants during COVID-19 pandemic ([news release](#))
- Implements additional public health measures in Toronto, Ottawa and Peel Region ([news release](#)) ([backgrounder](#))
- Increases production of COVID-19 testing supplies ([news release](#))
- Ontario helps keep energy costs low ([news release](#))
- Ontario supporting local festivals and events ([news release](#))
- Announces investments to further protect Ontario agri-food workers during COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Announces increased COVID-19 precautions for congregate care settings ([news release](#))

Other Provincial News:

- CUPE wants details of how province will handle potential COVID-19 spread in schools ([article](#))
- At least 61 COVID-19 cases tied to 'very large' outbreak at Hamilton spin studio, Spinco ([article](#))
- A principal's candid take on controlling COVID-19 in his school ([article](#))
- Coalition of 6200 Ottawa businesses demands data from province to justify closures ([article](#))
- COVID-19 outbreak declared at Wilfrid Laurier University residence building ([article](#))
- Coronavirus cases on the rise again in Ontario nursing homes ([article](#))
- Ontario reports a record-breaking 939 cases of COVID-19 prompting emergency provincial cabinet meeting ([article](#))
- Ontario pharmacies experience shortages of flu shot amid pandemic ([article](#))
- Typical Ontario electricity bill set to increase nearly 2% as fixed pricing ends ([article](#))
- Pandemic prompts some Ontario boards to scrap plans for high school final exams this year ([article](#))
- Mandatory masks made big impact on Ontario's COVID-19 trajectory: study ([article](#))
- No physical contact in OHL hockey ([article](#))

National Updates (since Oct. 7, 2020 Partner Update)

The Government of Canada:

- Governments Investing \$26.6 Million to Further Protect Ontario Agri-Food Workers During COVID-19 ([news release](#))
- Online Tool Kit Helps Workplaces Build Customized COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan ([news release](#))
- Launched applications for the Canada Recovery Benefit ([news release](#))
- Support research addressing mental health impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians ([news release](#)) ([backgrounder](#))
- Released a COVID-19 update for Indigenous Peoples and communities ([news release](#))
- Announced a one-time federal investment through the Emergency Processing Fund ([backgrounder](#))

- Announced new interest relief measure to provide help to Canada Student Loan borrowers on medical or parental leave ([news release](#))
- Deputy Prime Minister remarks: [October 9](#)
- Remarks from Chief Public Officer of Canada: October [13](#), [12](#), [11](#), [10](#), [8](#)

Other National News:

- These 70-plus hand sanitizers have been recalled by Health Canada ([article](#))
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety promote [COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide Toolkit](#) and tip sheets
- Evidence mounts that immunity from COVID-19 antibodies has limits ([article](#))
- Front-line retail workers call for return of COVID-19 pay bump as cases spike ([article](#))
- 240,000 people apply for new COVID-19 benefit on 1st day despite technical glitches ([article](#))
- Loneliness continues to harm Canadians' mental health ([article](#))
- 40-year old who dies of COVID-19 did not have underlying conditions ([article](#))
- Give young people alternatives, not lectures, to manage COVID-19 spread, say experts ([article](#))
- Majority of Canadians support closing non-essential businesses during second wave: Nanos survey ([article](#))
- COVID-19 could cost Canadian universities millions, even billions: Statistics Canada ([article](#))
- COVID-19: How strong relationships help kids catch up after six months of school closure ([article](#))
- Targeted aid coming for some businesses hit by COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Some Canadians making permanent move to Atlantic bubble over COVID-19 ([article](#))
- Canada still downplays risk of airborne spread of coronavirus despite WHO, CDC guidance ([article](#))
- Do you need COVID-19 insurance for out-of-province travel? ([article](#))

International Updates (since Oct. 7, 2020 Partner Update)

The World Health Organization (WHO):

- Reported a [recent survey](#) which found that COVID-19 had disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of countries worldwide while demand for services is increasing, resulting in a call for greater investment in mental health around the globe.

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 section on our main COVID-19 webpage "[I have been exposed to COVID-19.](#)"
 - [COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#)
 - 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](#)