

# COVID-19 Proactive Surveillance Testing

Update to York Region Long-Term Care/Retirement Homes and Community Living Facilities as of April 23, 2020

On April 21, 2020, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care committed to further action to ensure the safety of staff and residents in Long-Term Care/Retirement Home settings by announcing proactive surveillance testing. In addition, on April 22, 2020, Ontario Health expanded this to include community living facilities. Both of these announcements are attached to this message.

Public health units across Ontario are required to develop local implementation plans, in coordination with the Ontario Health region and Ministry of Long-Term Care, to facilitate **testing of every resident and staff**. The testing of residents is a high priority, but the importance of staff testing in these settings, particularly among those who are asymptomatic, is being emphasized. In addition, Long-Term Care/Retirement Homes at high risk and homes currently experiencing an outbreak among staff and/or residents will be prioritized.

## York Region Public Health's Local Implementation Plan

York Region Public Health (YRPH) will be contacting all Long-Term Care/Retirement Homes and Community Living Facilities to:

- Determine if additional supports are required to ensure timely collection of nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs within these facilities, for both residents and staff
- Request the list of all residents and staff who require testing (and specifically those individuals not previously tested for COVID-19)
- Arrange for delivery of NP swabs and laboratory requisition forms to the facilities
- Arrange for pick-up and delivery of collected specimens to the lab

Long-Term Care/Retirement Homes and Community Living Facilities will be contacted by YRPH:

- Priority for calls will be given to those facilities currently in COVID-19 outbreak, followed by those facilities in respiratory outbreak and then to all remaining facilities.
- Please **do not** take your residents to the hospital emergency department for testing, to avoid unnecessary exposure of your residents to illness.

## Status of COVID-19 Institutional Outbreaks in York Region

As of April 22, 2020, there are 35 COVID-19 outbreaks in York Region. This proactive surveillance testing is an important component of a comprehensive response being implemented to address COVID-19 among these vulnerable populations to ensure facilities are provided with every resource necessary to stop the spread. Detailed information on COVID-19 outbreaks in institutional settings in York Region, including outbreaks, resident/staff cases and deaths, can be found at [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19).

## Reporting Probable and Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 to York Region Public Health

If you have a resident or staff member showing symptoms of COVID-19, call York Region Public Health immediately at:

- 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280 on Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. **OR**
- 905-953-6478 after hours

## Questions

Long-Term Care/Retirement Homes and Congregate Living Facilities can direct inquiries to [HEOCLiaison@york.ca](mailto:HEOCLiaison@york.ca) or 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74164, Monday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC HEALTH**

[york.ca/healthprofessionals](http://york.ca/healthprofessionals)



April 21, 2020

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Health System Organizations and Providers

**FROM:** **Helen Angus**  
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health

**Richard Steele**  
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care

**Dr. David Williams**  
Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health

**RE: Testing in Long-Term Care Homes**

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The Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) have been closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 in the province's long-term care homes. As part of the COVID-19 Action Plan for Protecting Long-Term Care Homes, the Command Table has taken action to increase testing in the province's long-term care homes.

The province will immediately begin proactive surveillance testing to understand the current status of COVID-19 in individual homes, including the targeted testing of asymptomatic residents and staff.

Each Public Health Unit (PHU) should immediately begin developing a local implementation plan, in coordination with the Ontario Health region and MLTC region, to facilitate testing of every resident and staff at each long-term care home. While testing of residents should be a priority, the implementation plan should also enable an understanding of the prevalence of COVID-19 amongst staff, particularly asymptotically.

It is expected that this plan be implemented as soon as possible. PHUs should prioritize homes with a 'red' status and homes currently in outbreak with residents or staff showing symptoms. PHUs can also use their clinical judgment to identify additional information available to prioritize additional testing. PHUs should draw on local supports to increase capacity to support this initiative, such as engaging with local community paramedics.

This point-in-time testing will enable homes, PHUs, and the province to better understand the prevalence of COVID-19 in long-term care homes and inform future planning. Testing is

an important component of a comprehensive response plan being implemented to address COVID-19 in this vulnerable population in order to ensure that these facilities have every resource needed to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

*(original signed by)*

Helen Angus  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Health

Richard Steele  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Long-Term Care

Dr. David Williams  
Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Ministry of Health



# Ontario Health

To: Health System Partners

From: Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health

SUBJECT: April 22, 2020 -- UPDATE #2: Health System COVID-19 Pandemic Response

The information below from Ontario Health's COVID-19 Health System Response Team, part of the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Response Structure, is the second of ongoing updates. It highlights the work in critical areas as we quicken efforts with provincial, regional and local pandemic planning partners.

## **Long-Term Care**

- Accelerating immediate measures to support the province's COVID-19 Action Plan: Long-Term Care Homes.
- Working with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, fast-tracking efforts with the Regions, additional partner ministries, Public Health Ontario, Ontario hospitals and others to support long-term care and retirement homes in aggressive testing, screening and surveillance; managing outbreaks and spread of the disease; growing the long-term care workforce; and ensuring critical supplies including personal protective equipment.
- Also supporting programs to provide on-demand access to primary care or general internal medicine supplementary clinical expertise via virtual and phone consults.

## **Testing**

- In addition to long-term care homes and retirement residences, supporting expanded testing of other vulnerable populations: hospital inpatients; health care workers, caregivers, care providers, first responders; and community living facilities.
- Ramping up testing is the result of eradicating the backlog in testing results thanks to co-ordination by the COVID-19 Diagnostic Network Operations Centre – 20+ organizations now participating – that has enormously increased testing capability.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and labs across the province, the province met its 8,000+ tests a day target by mid-April and are working toward 14,000+ tests a day by later this month.
- Work includes supporting Assessment Centres across the province to proactively expand screening and set regional and local testing targets to increase volumes.
- There are currently 108 Assessment Centres open to the public, an additional three open for healthcare workers only, and two specifically serving six Indigenous communities.

### **Hospital Capacity Planning**

- Supporting hospitals across the province aligning new acute care bed capacity with potential demand.
- Hospitals also are repurposing beds and equipment from other areas to prepare to expand critical care capacity.
- Plus, working to keep ahead of the disease curve by implementing alternative, unconventional spaces, including adjacent field hospital sites.
- Asked hospitals not to begin ramping up elective surgeries and procedures if their hospitals have capacity because of the impact long-term care needs could have on acute care and the very high risks. Working on recommendations for taking a measured approach to ramping up at the appropriate time.

### **Critical Care**

- An Ontario-wide Critical Care COVID-19 Command Centre responding to needs for COVID critical care capacity, making sure the province is able to maximize available resources at all times, where they are needed.
- Includes moving resources to meet local demands and to address any emerging pressures in critical care capacity.
- Specifically, the Critical Care Command Centre is working to increase the availability of critical care beds and ventilators across the province, use innovative staffing models, provide access to the pandemic stock when required, and re-purpose existing spaces and equipment to maximize the critical care bed capacity.
- The Command Centre combines the strengths and functionality of Ornge, CitiCall, Critical Care Services Ontario, and the province's regional critical care leadership.

### **Supply Chain: PPE, Ventilators, etc.**

- Continuing to support the Ministry of Health in procuring and distributing critical supplies and equipment throughout the province.
- Also looking at evidence-based approaches health care organizations could take, should, in the worst-case scenario, we are ever faced with a severe shortage of PPE that might strain, or possibly outstrip, our supply chain capacity.
- Approaches under consideration are not currently being put in place in any clinical settings.

### **Patient and Caregiver Input**

- A Patient and Family Advisors group created to advise me as Ontario Health's President and CEO about the COVID-19 response.
- Members includes patient council chairs and other patient and family representatives from across the Ontario Health network.

### **Health System Response Team**

- Welcoming Shripal Doshi on an interim basis from KPMG's Management Consulting Practice to lead the unified supply chain team.
- Also welcoming Dr. Vanessa Allen, Chief Microbiology at Public Health Ontario, to lead the integrated lab testing effort.
- With special thanks to David Hallett who returns to his retirement after helping put an enhanced system and infrastructure in place to help keep PPE and other supplies flowing in the face of travel disruptions and import challenges, and prior to that, setting up the integrated lab testing system.

Huge thanks, as always, to everyone in the health system for your incredible service and unrelenting work juggling many issues as we all continue to respond to COVID-19.

Matthew Anderson