

Update for Partners

COVID-19

April 1, 2020

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Message from the Medical Officer of Health

The greatest concern in Simcoe Muskoka is community spread of COVID-19 making it important for you to protect yourselves and others, and in particular our community's most vulnerable members.

- If you are experiencing any symptoms or are 70+ years old stay home.
- Limit the number of people you come in contact with by staying home as much as possible and avoiding non-essential trips into the community.
- Practise physical distancing by maintaining a 2 metre distance.
- Practice good hygiene:
 - washing hands frequently
 - covering coughs and sneezes
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay physically active (exercise outdoors/go for a walk if you don't have symptoms).
- Stay connected, check on those who may need help and reach out for help if you need it.
- Continue practising physical distancing when you must go out and wash your hands frequently. Continue connecting with and supporting those in your community who are older and those who are self-isolating.

The importance of these measures cannot be overstated at this critical time. I encourage you to promote these messages to avoid the spread of the virus amongst your own employees, workplaces, constituents and clients.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank health care workers, grocery workers, custodians, people who are working to keep our supply chain stocked and others working at [essential workplaces](#). Your efforts and dedication during this time is greatly appreciated.

Dr. Charles Gardner
Medical Officer of Health

Current Situation

Local Situation – Simcoe Muskoka (As of 09:30 March 31, 2020)

Community transmission is being experienced in Simcoe Muskoka. There are 52 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 virus in Simcoe Muskoka residents, including 9 recovered, 8 hospitalizations and 4 virus-related deaths. Eleven 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 Dr. Gardner's daily media briefings on [YouTube](#) for more information.

Provincial Situation – Ontario (As of 10:30 March 31, 2020)

Ontario is experiencing a trend of continuing to have biggest single day increases for the last several days resulting in a total of 1996 confirmed cases. This includes 534 people who have recovered and 33 deaths. There are currently 4,280 people being investigated with lab results pending. A total of 51,629 tests have been completed.

For the most up-to-date information on the status of COVID-19 in Ontario see the [Province of Ontario website](#)

National Situation – Canada (As of 18:00 March 31, 2020)

There are 8,536 confirmed cases of people with the COVID-19 virus in Canada and 96 virus-related deaths. A total of 241,138 tests have been completed. At this time in Canada, almost 65% 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 summary](#) 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

Simcoe Muskoka

- **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. It also means we expect the number of cases will start to rise over the next days and weeks. Due to this, public health will be unable to monitor how the virus is spreading from person to person making it more difficult to slow its spread. In light of this, **physical distancing** is the best tool we have to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Although older adults are considered to be at higher risk for more severe outcomes, this disease is affecting younger adults with most of our cases among adults between 35 and 64 years of age.

Provincial/National

- 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.
- There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes of COVID-19 for Canadians:
 - aged 65 and over (It has been strongly recommended that individuals over the age of 70 years self-isolate by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health);
 - with compromised immune systems
 - with underlying medical conditions
- There is an increased risk for Canadians who have travelled or are travelling abroad. At this time all international travel should be avoided.
- The Government of Canada **announced an Emergency Order** under the Quarantine Act that requires **all Canadians who have returning from international travel** to go directly home and stay there for 14 days (exceptions include persons who cross the border regularly to ensure the continued flow of goods and services, and those who provide essential services). In addition to the federal order, the Province of Ontario issued an emergency order through the emergency alert system requiring everyone who has travelled outside of the Ontario to also go directly home and self-isolate for 14 days. These orders are for all travellers, including people without symptoms and those with symptoms.

- An enhanced interactive [self-assessment tool](#) is available from the Ontario Ministry of Health. If you think you may have COVID-19 symptoms, use the tools and follow the advice provided.

COVID-19 Planning and Response

SMDHU Response

- 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.
- [SMDHU Vulnerable Populations for COVID-19 Response Interactive 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.
- 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.
- Dr Gardner, Simcoe Muskoka’s Medical Officer of Health will continue to hold virtual media briefings every weekday at 1:00 p.m. on the [SMDHU Facebook page](#) and posted on [YouTube](#) with closed captioning.
- Key messages and information are shared on the SMDHU COVID-19 [website](#), Facebook page and twitter account.
- SMDHU will be involved in the opening of emergency child care centres from an IPAC and food safety perspective.

Local Response

- Local companies, businesses and individuals are being called on 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.
 - We have [information about who to contact](#), if you are a company, business or individual who can donate any of the items listed above.
- There are five [assessment centres](#) open within Simcoe and two in Muskoka. The Muskoka centres opened March 31.
- Local 211 is available to support community members needing support and assistance by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting their [website](#) for more information. They also have [live chat](#) available Monday to Friday 7am-9pm.

Ontario Response

- Provincial Orders:
 - [Prohibition of organized public events and social gatherings of more than 5 people](#) replacing previous order prohibiting public events of over 50 people. The order does not apply to private households of more than five people, or child care centres supporting frontline health care workers and funerals which are permitted to proceed with up to 10 people at one time.
 - [Protecting consumers from price gouging](#)
 - Offenders can be ticketed or if convicted face fines or jail time ([penalties to combat price gouging](#))
 - Consumers can report price gouging by filing a complaint at 1-800-889-9768 (M-F 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.) or by [filing a report online](#).
 - You can also [share your feedback](#) to improve the rules under Ontario's Consumer Protection Act.
 - [Emergency measures to support long-term care homes](#) during COVID-19 including funding, resources and flexibility to support staffing.
 - 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. For questions about the Emergency Order closing non-essential businesses, municipalities can contact the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOCDO01@ontario.ca). Businesses can contact Stop the Spread Business Information Line (1-888-444-3659), Monday to Sunday, from 8:30am – 5:00pm.
- Failing to comply with an emergency order is an offence. Enforcement of provincial Emergency Orders has been expanded and now includes: police officers, constables, provincial offence officers, municipal law enforcement officers, by-law enforcement officers, and employees of municipalities/local boards whose responsibilities include enforcement.
- In addition the Premier has also requested that Ontario residents stay at their primary residence so as to not overwhelm supply chains and the health care systems in small communities.
- The province also [proclaimed the Supply Chain Management Act](#) to ensure critical supplies, equipment and services can be deployed where they're needed most.
- Other provincial activities include:
 - [new webpages](#) to enhance public reporting and change how they report cases;
 - allowing hospitals to operate and use other premises to operate and use as a hospital (subsection 42(2) of the Public Hospitals Act) (until June 30, 2020);
 - optimize availability of PPE by having health system providers report PPE inventory on a daily basis;
 - addressing lab supply issues, testing capacity and reducing the backlog of tests;
 - support assessment of COVID-19 through dedicated assessment centres (72 currently operational)
 - support enhanced measures to keep staff, volunteers and residents of [long-term care homes safe](#)
 - More training for staff

- Regional Infection control networks (bring in expert teams)
- More screening

National Response

- The Canadian government announced:
 - Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy for any business (no matter how many employees) who has experienced at least a 30% decrease in revenue.
 - Funding for Kids Help Phone
 - Kids Help Phone can be accessed 24/7 for children and youth in crisis during this time from anywhere in Canada, via [phone](#), [text](#) or [online chat](#).
 - Funding for United Way to support vulnerable seniors

Resources

- SMDHU COVID-19 website has all the information you are looking for. Content has been organized to make it easier to find information for:
 - [the public](#)
 - [workplaces and partners](#)
 - [Public Signage](#) available for: physical distancing, washing your hands, visitors
 - [Shelters](#)
 - [Food operators](#)
 - [Childcare](#)
 - [Municipalities](#)
 - [employers and employees](#)
 - [health professionals](#)
- An enhanced interactive [self-assessment tool](#) is available from the Ontario Ministry of Health.
- [Updated guidance](#) for [Construction site health and safety](#) (following initial guidance from March 20) to help them better understand their responsibilities and requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on the job
- Government of Canada [guidance documents](#)
- Public Health Ontario [fact sheets](#) - updated information for people with symptoms on how to self-isolate and when and how to wear a mask.
- [Provincial social media kit](#): social media messages to share
- [Learn at home](#) section added to the Government of Ontario website
- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) (OMOH)
- [Government of Canada](#) (GOC)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)
- [World Health Organization](#) (WHO)

Resources coming soon

- Guidance for Funeral Homes, Child Care Services for Essential Workers, and direction regarding Migrant Workers