



News Release

Ontario Increasing Public Health Units' Capacity to Stop COVID-19

April 3, 2020

TORONTO — To support public health units' extensive efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, Ontario is taking further action to redirect existing resources to focus squarely on the fight against this new virus while allowing for public health units to considerably increase their capacity.

Ontario has launched a [new user-friendly online portal](#) for the public to easily access their COVID-19 lab test results. By offering faster and secure access to test results on their computer or mobile device, this portal will help ease pressures on public health units and frontline workers to provide this information so that they can better focus on containing COVID-19.

"With this new portal, patients will be able to access their test results faster from the safety of their home," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "It will help reduce the burden on our public health units and frontline health workers, allowing them to focus their efforts where they are needed most during this challenging time."

Ontario is also issuing a [new emergency order](#) under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, effective immediately, to provide public health units the authority and flexibility they need to make staffing decisions that support their ongoing fight against the outbreak of COVID-19, despite any collective agreements. As a result, public health units will be able to significantly expand their capacity to implement critical public health functions, such as case and contact management, through the use of volunteers, including the thousands of retired nurses and medical students who have signed up through the province's website.

This latest order will support the recommendation made by Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, for all public health units to implement more aggressive contact tracing and management in response to the increase of community transmission. The province's medical officers of health are also encouraged to use their authority under Section 22 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* to ensure isolation of cases and contacts of COVID-19.

"We are at a critical juncture in our fight against COVID-19," said Elliott. "Our success as a province depends on our ability to quickly and effectively stop the spread of this new virus. These actions offer considerable support to our local health units and give them the authority they need to act and contain COVID-19 in our communities."

QUICK FACTS

- Patients will be asked to verify their identity with the information on their photo health card. The portal will provide patients with their test results and offer guidance on next steps.
- On March 30, 2020, Dr. Williams issued a [statement](#) to strongly encourage Ontarians to stay home, limit the number of essential trips and adhere to physical distancing.
- If you think you may have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it, first self-isolate and then use [Ontario's Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if you need to seek further care.
- Take these everyday steps to reduce exposure to COVID-19 and protect your health:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
 - Sneeze and cough into your sleeve;
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
 - Avoid contact with people who are sick; and
 - Stay home if you are sick.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
- Learn about [travel advisories](#) related to COVID-19.
- If you are a health care professional, learn how to protect yourself and your patients by reading our [guidance documents](#).

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