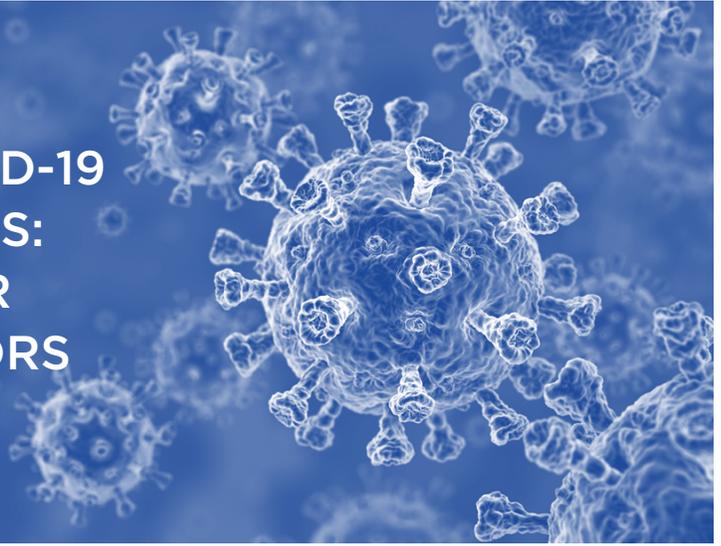




HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYERS: ACCESS TO SCHOOL FOR PERSONS AND EDUCATORS



OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, students and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

Learn more about:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)

BEST PRACTICES TO KEEP PERSONS AT THE SCHOOL HEALTHY AND SAFE

The health and safety of everyone is a top concern amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, all parties must place an increased focus on health and safety in order to protect the health and safety of anyone who is required to enter the school.

All measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 should be in compliance with requirements under the OHSA and its regulations and the applicable public health directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.



Below are a set of best practices for each workplace party to help schools prevent the spread of COVID-19 while workers, students, parents and other persons access school buildings.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS-GENERAL GUIDANCE

The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then face – mouth, nose or eyes. Here is some general guidance and [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons, including clients and co-workers.
- Wear a mask or face covering when in an indoor public place.
- Promote good hygiene such as:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled, before and after any breaks, at the beginning and end of their shift, and before preparing food or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with greater than 60% alcohol content) if hand washing is not possible.
 - Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
 - If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
 - Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Implement regular cleaning and disinfection (see environmental cleaning and disinfection)
- Minimize contact with people who are sick and ensure controls are in place for the protection of workers.
- Instruct workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Wash your hands and clothes as soon as you get home.
- Instruct staff who have symptoms or think they were exposed to COVID-19, to notify their supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions provided.

ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PLAN

All workplaces in Ontario should develop a safety plan that includes at a minimum how they will implement key health and safety measures such as screening, physical distancing, masks or face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, and the wearing of personal protective equipment. Establish an infectious disease preparedness and response plan. The plan should follow recommendations in [guidance notes](#) from the [Ministry of Health](#) and directives from [Public Health Ontario](#). The plan should consider and address levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks within Parks & Recreation operations such as; Parks & Recreation workers, Arena attendants, Cleaning & Maintenance Workers, Aquatic workers, Equipment Operators, Instructors, Volunteers and any Office staff. This includes how the Parks & Recreation organization will operate during and throughout the



recovery phase following the pandemic e.g. sanitization of the workplace, equipment and resources, how employees report illness, how to ensure physical distancing and how work will be scheduled.

To access the most recent Ministry of Health guidance notes please visit and scroll down to find your relevant sector information:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx

A list of activities and links to relevant resources to provide support in this area are listed below:

- Workplaces shall implement this screening for any workers or essential visitors entering the work environment. Screening should occur before or when a worker enters the workplace at the beginning of their day or shift, or when an essential visitor arrives. At a minimum, the questions outlined by the [Chief Medical Officer of Health](#) should be used to screen individuals for COVID-19 before they are permitted entry into the workplace (business or organization). The tool may be adapted based on need and the specific setting.
- Place posters or other signage in high traffic areas:
 - Asking clients or customers to stay home if they have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing)
 - Require all persons entering the workplace to wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin during any period when they are in the indoor area(unless exempted).
 - Encouraging good respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and other healthy practices at the entrance to the workplace. Consider hand sanitizer stations at these locations where possible. Consider remote work for employees wherever and whenever possible.
- Institute measures to physically separate or impose physical distance of at least 2 metres between persons. This could be done by use of physical partitions, visual cues or signage to limit close contact.
- Provide training to workers on COVID-19, how it spreads, risk of exposure, including those who may be at higher risk (i.e. have underlying health conditions) and procedures to follow including reporting process, proper hand washing practices and other routine infection control precautions.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home, ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance. Communicate these policies to employees.
- Based on risk of exposure, consider implementing a process for containing and laundering work clothing. Alternatively, advise workers to practice good laundry hygiene practices with their clothing as it could potentially be a source of contamination.
- Have a system for reporting probable and confirmed cases to the local [Public Health](#) unit. Communication about who will take responsibility, ensuring proper documentation, and implementing any advice given by the Public Health unit is critical for containing the spread of COVID-19.
- Assign staff to dedicated work areas as much as possible. Discourage them from sharing phones, desks, offices and other tools and equipment.



- Limit the exchange of papers (e.g. signing contracts). If documents must be exchanged, leave them on a clean surface while maintaining a two-metre distance. Avoid sharing pens and office equipment. Disinfect after each use.
- Schedule visits to eliminate people gathering in reception areas.

ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

SCHOOL BOARD BEST PRACTICES

- School boards should engage with the local Public Health Unit as necessary.
- Develop and communicate protocols for accessing the school, including staff, parents, students and community partners such as daycares, etc.
- Provide information and instruction to workers on COVID-19, how it spreads, risk of exposure, including those who may be at higher risk (i.e. have underlying health conditions) and procedures to follow including reporting process, proper [hand washing](#) and sanitizing practices and other routine infection control and protective measures.
- Post consistent and accurate signage regarding building access and expectations of persons entering schools.
- Provide cleaning and disinfecting products to appropriate workers to ensure regular cleaning and disinfecting is conducted on common surfaces such as door handles, stair railings, elevator buttons and in washroom facilities (if open for use).
- Provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects the eyes, nose and mouth (surgical/procedure mask and goggles or face shield) if:
 - they are required to come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose and chin in an indoor area and,
 - if they not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person.

RETRIEVING STUDENT PERSONAL ITEMS BEST PRACTICES BY ROLE

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR/PRINCIPAL BEST PRACTICES

- Establish a system for self-assessment using the [online tools](#) if [active screening](#) is not available with sign in/ sign out provisions for workers and persons retrieving student personal items
 - Anyone with a temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius (100 F) or higher, and/or experiencing any cold-like symptoms, fever, cough or vomiting and/or diarrhea, and those who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are self-isolating due exposure to having been exposed to a person with COVID-19 should stay home and not enter the school.
 - Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days should not enter the school.



- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access to the school (e.g., hand sanitizing, physical distancing).
- Monitor and enforce protocols during access to the school. Share the protocols in advance of persons arriving at the school to ensure they are well-informed of the safety measures to be followed when at the school. Ensure that signage at the school indicate the protocols to be followed by those entering the school.
- Where possible allow only 1 person to retrieve student belongings except in extenuating circumstances
 - Confirm that custodial staff will be on site to perform enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of common high touch surfaces throughout the day such as door handles, stair railings, elevator buttons and in washroom facilities.
 - Ensure ongoing communication with custodian and caretaker staff to identify and remedy school facility issues (e.g., ventilation, washrooms, fountains, alarms, etc.)
 - Limit the number of entry points to the school and provide sanitization stations, or hand-washing stations at school entrances and exits, (e.g. alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content)
 - Inform individuals entering the school that they are required to wash their hands
 - Confirm request for school building access (e.g. form). Inform individuals of the access process in advance of the scheduled time to retrieve belongings or to return school materials.
 - Determine a schedule and time intervals based on each school building(s). Consider using a system similar to the parent-teacher interview process. Consider limiting time to 15 minutes or less. Have a process to track the date, entry and exit into the school by all individuals.
 - This process will assist with contact tracing if required.
 - Provide garbage bags for individuals to retrieve belongings and use totes/bins lined with garbage bag for return of items/materials.
 - Returned materials/items should be tracked, cleaned and disinfected prior to reuse.
 - Ensure physical distancing. Alternatively, implement other measures and training.
- If persons entering the school have a face covering (non-medical mask such as a cloth mask), they are encouraged to wear them where physical distancing is challenging or not possible.
- Limit the number of individuals in the building at one time to facilitate physical distancing; consider limiting access by floor, zones or areas; portable classrooms and classrooms with separate access doors may need controlled access supervision by school staff.
- Have entry and exit plans for schools, including parking and lineups for check-in that maintain physical distancing of 2 metres. Consider having directional signage to assist with way finding to/from classroom or locker.
- Institute measures to physically separate or impose physical distance of at least 2 metres between persons. This could be done by:
 - separate entrances and exits
 - use of physical partitions, visual cues or signage to limit close contact (both outside when waiting for access and inside markers for traffic flow).



- if classroom has an exterior door to outside consider separate entrance for those classrooms only, including portable classrooms.
- To decrease the number of locations that need to be cleaned and disinfected, it is recommended that libraries, staff rooms and cafeterias be closed. Consider closing water fountains and washrooms and provide signage at the entrances to indicate that water fountains and washrooms are not be available for use.
- Have designated single access washrooms for staff that are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- If possible, stairs should be used while in building. If elevator use is necessary, only one person should be in the elevator at a time (unless they are family members who live in the same household).
- After safety measures are in place and persons entering the school are informed of these measures, staff can provide access to individual students' lockers or other areas used for storage of their personal items at the scheduled time. Consider laying out student materials provided issues of confidentiality, theft risk and/or other safety considerations do not hinder the ability to do so.
 - A staff member should attend in the classroom (i.e. for Elementary schools, portable classrooms and classrooms with separate/outdoor entry doors) when belongings are being retrieved and will maintain 2 meter-distance.
 - Hallways should be monitored to maintain distancing where locker access is required
 - Only one person should be allowed except in extenuating circumstances. Consider restricting the presence of younger students (i.e. particularly primary: JK to Grade 3 and junior: Grades 4-6). With intermediate and senior grades (Grade 7-12) the student may retrieve their own items particularly if locker access is required.
 - Lost and found materials should be laid out so the items can be seen without having to touch them if boards choose to disperse them during this retrieval process.
- Determine protocols for the return of school or board owned materials.

EDUCATORS BEST PRACTICES

- Follow board and school protocols.
- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access (e.g., hand washing/sanitizing, 2-metre physical distancing).
- Staff will oversee movement through the building and to the student's classroom or locker to retrieve necessary items.

CUSTODIAN AND CARETAKER TEAMS BEST PRACTICES

- Follow board and school protocols.
- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access (e.g., hand washing/sanitizing, physical distancing).
- Arrange hand sanitizing stations at designated areas with signage



- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces throughout the day (at least twice per day or more often if visibly soiled).
- Wear appropriate PPE as recommended by the Safety Data Sheet when handling cleaning products.
- Identify and remedy facility issues. (e.g., ventilation, water fountains, washrooms, alarms, etc.)
- Follow school board and school protocols regarding any closures of for ensure non-essential common areas such as libraries, staff rooms and cafeterias and public washrooms are closed. If school board and school protocols indicate that water fountains are to be closed, it is recommended that they be covered so that they are not available for use.
- Ensure appropriate steps are taken to clearly designate single access washroom for staff use and that staff washrooms are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Ensure locks requested to be removed in advance are done prior to access day. During access day if a lock is unable to be opened by an individual during the scheduled time, they may reschedule for a subsequent date.
- Place garbage pails lined with plastic garbage bags throughout the school near lockers and high traffic areas including in each classroom for elementary schools.
- Prop open up doors to minimize touch surfaces where possible.
- Ensure clear pathway and hallways for retrieval of materials.

HALL MONITORING BEST PRACTICES

- Hallways should be monitored to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres where locker access is required.
- Report to the administrator/principal instances of congestion and non-compliance with public health measures.
- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access (e.g., hand sanitizing, physical distancing).

PERSON RETRIEVING STUDENTS' PERSONAL ITEMS BEST PRACTICES

- Follow all the protocols set by the school. This includes:
 - Complete school/locker access request in advance of entry to school building
 - Conduct COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) measures in advance of arriving at the school
 - Arrive at the designated time and follow the process established by the school
 - Complete screening questions upon arrival as prompted
 - Maintain physical distancing of 2 metres
 - Clean and disinfect hands upon entry to school building or locker
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth. Cover cough/sneeze with tissue or into your arm, not your hands.
 - 1 person allowed except in extenuating circumstances to retrieve belongings
 - In the building use stairs if possible unless elevator is necessary.



- Go directly to the classroom and/or locker. No loitering/mingling inside or outside of the school. Follow direction of persons monitoring the halls.
- Comply with scheduled date and time provided for access.
- Require all persons entering the workplace to wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin during any period when they are in the indoor area(unless exempted).
- Any personal belongings will be retrieved in an as-is state and no items will be cleaned or disinfected prior to collection.
- Return books, materials or electronic devices (e.g., computers, Chrome books, iPads, assistive devices, etc.) according to school provisions.

ONGOING EDUCATOR/STAFF ACCESS:

ADMINISTRATOR/PRINCIPAL BEST PRACTICES

- Instruct staff who have symptoms or think they were exposed to COVID-19, to notify their supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions provided
- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access (e.g., hand sanitizing, physical distancing).
- Instruct workers on protocols to follow while in the school and monitor and enforce protocols during access to school
- Ensure there is a process to identify staff entry/exit to the school building.
 - This process will assist with contact tracing if required
- Confirm custodial staff will be on site to perform enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces throughout the day. .
- Ensure ongoing communication with custodian and caretaker staff to identify and remedy facility issues. (e.g., ventilation, water fountains, washrooms, alarms, etc.)
- Provide sanitization stations, or hand-washing stations at entrances and exits, (e.g. alcohol-based hand sanitizer a minimum of 60% alcohol content)
 - Individuals entering are asked to wash their hands
- Place posters or other signage in high traffic areas:
 - Asking staff to stay home if they have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing).
 - Encouraging good respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and other healthy practices at the entrance to the school.
- Limit the total number of people at the workplace and where they are assigned to work
- Assign staff to dedicated work areas as much as possible. Discourage them from sharing phones, desks, offices and other tools and equipment.
- Post signage on hygiene in English and majority languages in the workplace so everyone can understand how to do their part respecting hygiene practices.
- Maintain physical distancing of 2 metres. Identify locations in the school with potential for lineups (e.g., washrooms, offices, entry etc.) and implement signage or markers to implement physical distancing



- If possible, stairs should be used while in building. If elevator use is necessary, only one worker should be in at a time.
- Consider implementing a system for virtual and/or telephone consultations with workers regarding access to the school by parents and others when and where possible
- Non-essential face-to-face appointments should be postponed or converted to virtual appointments
- Have workers work from home whenever possible according to health officials' guidelines and board practices in place unless they have been asked to attend the school in person
- Consider staggered start times, including breaks and lunches
- Restrict visitors and limit workplace entry to only essential personnel
- Suspend all group activities and gatherings
- Alter the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture or using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing
- Ensure custodial staff are conducting frequent cleaning and disinfecting of washroom facilities and commonly touched surfaces.
- Have designated single access washrooms for staff.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces such as door handles, stair railings, elevator buttons, light switches, washroom facilities, counters, desk surfaces, electronic equipment twice a day and when visibly soiled.
- Address the health and safety concerns raised by workers or members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

EDUCATORS BEST PRACTICES

- Follow board and school protocols and ensure that health and safety issues are brought to the attention of the school administrator/principal and Joint Health and Safety Committee.
- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access (e.g., hand sanitizing, 2-metre physical distancing).
- Stay home if sick or feeling unwell.
- If staff who have symptoms or think they were exposed to COVID-19, to notify their supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions provided.
- Maintain physical distancing of 2 metres.
 - Practice hand hygiene measures

CUSTODIAN/CARETAKER BEST PRACTICES

- Follow board and school protocols and ensure that health and safety issues are brought to the attention of the school administrator/principal and Joint Health and Safety Committee.
- Follow Public Health preventive measures during access (e.g., hand sanitizing, physical distancing).
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of washrooms and high touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, railings, elevator buttons, light switches, table tops, etc.) throughout the day (at least twice per day or more often if visibly soiled).
- Wear appropriate PPE as recommended by the Safety Data Sheet when handling cleaning products.



- Arrange hand sanitizing stations at designated areas with signage
- Identify and remedy facility issues. (e.g., ventilation, water fountains and washrooms, alarms, etc.)
- Ensure appropriate steps are taken to clearly designate single access washroom for staff use and clean and disinfect those regularly.
- Close non-essential common areas such as libraries, staff rooms and cafeterias where recommended by the school administration/principal.
- Drinking fountains should be turned off and/or covered up and rendered unavailable for use where recommended by the school administrator/principal.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

While employers always have an obligation to [maintain clean workplaces](#), that obligation is under sharper focus during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The COVID-19 virus can survive for several days on different surfaces and objects. Frequent cleaning and disinfection is important to prevent spread of the disease. Many common household and commercial disinfectant products will destroy the COVID-19 virus. Some disinfectants will have an eight-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN). These products are approved for use by Health Canada. Refer to the Public Health Ontario [Fact Sheet for Environmental cleaning](#) for more details.

Employers should focus on:

- Easy access to soap and water (ways to properly clean hands) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of washroom facilities.
- Posting signage on hygiene in English and majority languages in the workplace so everyone can understand how to do their part respecting hygiene practices.
- Sanitizing of commonly touched surfaces or areas e.g. door handles, railings, tables, light switches, work surfaces, equipment e.g. ice resurfacer or vehicle steering wheel, computer keyboards and mice, telephones etc.) twice daily as a minimum or as required or when visibly soiled

REPORTING ILLNESS

The symptoms of COVID-19 are shared with many other illnesses including the cold and flu. At this time, it is recommended that anyone who begins to feel unwell (fever, new cough or difficulty breathing) should return home and [self-isolate](#) immediately. If you are a caregiver, have a household member, or a contact of someone who has COVID-19 you should follow the guidance from public health on [self-isolation](#).

People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone - either by calling their primary care provider's office or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000. If you need additional assessment, your primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario will direct you to in-person care options.

Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days should self-isolate upon return from travel and should not go to work.



Workers who have travelled and are part of workplaces that are essential to daily living are able to return to work as long as they do not have symptoms. However, they should self-monitor for a period of 14 days and identify themselves to their employer so that a plan can be put into place to ensure the protection of those workplaces.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACE SAFETY & INSURANCE BOARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The OHSA requires an employer to provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a worker has an occupational illness (including COVID-19) from exposure in the workplace or if a claim has been made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) by or on behalf of the worker with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:

- Ministry of Labour;
- Joint health and safety committee (or health and safety representative); and
- Trade union, if any.

For more information:

- [Occupational Illness: Requirements to Report to the Ministry of Labour](#)

Any instances of occupationally-acquired illnesses shall be reported to [WSIB](#) within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.

SHARE INFORMATION

It is important that all parties in a workplace understand their roles and responsibilities. Employers need to ensure health and safety policies are updated and posted for all employees to see. Using industry resources, including this one and those produced by [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#) (PSHSA), the Ministry of Health, and Public Health Ontario will improve workplace understanding.

POST YOUR POLICIES

All employers need to post and communicate COVID-19 policies to employees. These policies should cover how the workplace will operate, including but not limited to:

- The sanitization of workplaces
- How work will be scheduled including screening, physical distancing, the use of masks and PPE
- How workers and contractors report illnesses

All businesses should have a workplace illness policy. If a policy does not currently exist or does not align with COVID-19 recommendations, the following should be included: Sick employees must stay home or be



sent home from work; For employees housed in workplace accommodations, sick employees must be confined to their rooms until cleared for re-entry into the workforce; Sick employees should use the self-assessment tool for COVID-19 and follow the subsequent directions; When employees go home sick, their work areas must be cleaned and disinfected.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (MLTSD) REQUIREMENTS

The MLTSD is focused on providing enhanced protections for workers. Announced on March 16th, these protections include [expanded protected leaves](#) and improving access to EI benefits.

TRACK AND MONITOR YOUR WORKFORCE

Due to the latency period of COVID-19, it is important to track where workers have worked, where possible. If a worker tests positive for COVID-19, the local public health unit will ask employers to provide information on where the worker worked as well as the contact information of any other worker who may have been exposed.

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY-ISSUED RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus



- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

- It also provides the most up-to-date information on:
- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.