



## EVERGREEN KEY MESSAGES

### 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Wuhan, China

**Issue Statement:** On December 31, 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in Hubei province, Central China, issued a public statement that they had identified an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown cause. China has made a determination that a novel coronavirus (referred to as COVID-19) is responsible for cases of pneumonia in the Wuhan outbreak.

For the latest and most up-to-date information about COVID-19, including the latest number of confirmed cases, visit [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus).

These media lines have been prepared for use by media relations and senior officials to respond to requests for information.

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## **COVID-19 key messages**

- Our top priority is the health and safety of Canadians.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is actively monitoring the situation regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and planning for all possible scenarios based on evidence as the science of the novel coronavirus continues to emerge.
- Canada has multiple systems in place to prepare for, detect and limit the spread of infectious disease, including COVID-19, in Canada.
- This is a serious public health issue and there is the possibility that the virus is present in countries that may not have the capacity to detect or contain the virus.
- The Government of Canada is working collaboratively with partners at all levels of government to respond to COVID-19, and to plan and prepare should the situation escalate.
- There are however a number of things that we can all do to stay healthy and prevent the spread of respiratory infections. Wash your hands, cover your cough and stay home when you are sick.
- For the latest and most up-to-date information, visit [canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus) or call the new toll-free phone line (1-833-784-4397) to get answers to questions about the 2019 novel coronavirus.

## **Global spread and preparedness**

- COVID-19 is a global issue and there is the possibility that the virus could be present in countries that may not have the capacity to detect or contain the virus.
- Our response must be based on evidence as our understanding of the science of COVID-19 continues to grow.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has assessed COVID-19 as a pandemic.
- The assessment by the WHO is not unexpected.
- In Canada, our health system is prepared for such a situation.
- Since the outset, the Public Health Agency of Canada-along with public health authorities at all levels of government across the country-have been working together to ensure that our preparedness and response measures are appropriate and adaptable, based on the latest science and the evolving situation.
- Our public health efforts will continue to focus on containment to delay the onset of community spread by rapidly identifying cases, meticulously finding close contacts and using tried and true public health measures such as isolation and physical distancing.
- In the event of community transmission, these actions will continue as long as feasible to interrupt chains of transmission in the community and to delay and reduce an outbreak where possible.



- The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Chief Public Health Officer are in close contact with the World Health Organization and other international partners, as well as with provincial and territorial counterparts.
- A Special Advisory Committee of Canada's Chief Medical Officers of Health is in place to respond to COVID-19. This Committee will focus its attention on coordination of federal, provincial and territorial preparedness and response across Canada's health sector.
- It is a critical time with global efforts focused on containment of the outbreak and the prevention of further spread.
- This is an evolving situation, and we will provide Canadians with new information as it becomes available.

### **Canada's domestic preparedness and response**

- Canada has multiple systems activated and in place to prepare for, prevent, detect, and respond to the spread of novel coronavirus. These include the following:
  - The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) activated the Health Portfolio Operations Centre (HPOC) to ensure effective planning and coordination of the Agency's response efforts, in collaboration with international and federal, provincial and territorial partners.
  - Public Safety Canada has activated the Government of Canada Operations Centre to coordinate activities across federal departments and agencies.
  - PHAC, through Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, is in close contact with provincial and territorial Chief Medical Officers of Health to share information, coordinate response efforts, and support informed vigilance as the situation evolves.
  - A Special Advisory Committee of Canada's Chief Medical Officers of Health and senior public health officials has been activated to focus on coordination of federal, provincial and territorial preparedness and response across Canada's health systems.
  - Routine traveller screening procedures are in place at all of Canada's ports of entry, and additional border screening measures have been expanded to all international airports in Canada to help identify any travellers returning to Canada who may be ill, and to raise awareness among travellers about what they should do if they become sick.
- The Government of Canada maintains continual preparedness for public health emergencies, taking precautions to mitigate the potential risk of introduction and spread of infectious diseases. These precautions include:
  - a comprehensive surveillance infrastructure to rapidly identify emerging events and infectious diseases, including respiratory illnesses;
  - routine infection prevention and control precautions in all Canadian hospitals; and
  - public health laboratory capacity that is well equipped to rapidly detect serious infectious diseases.



- Now is the time for organizers to be canceling, postponing or modifying events where many people gather. This includes concerts, conferences, large social or religious gatherings. We need to help prevent transmission of the virus. Particularly if you are ill, do not attend large events or crowded spaces.
- Everyone has to contribute to flattening the epidemic curve. We have to modify our behaviours including personal hygiene measures, like frequent hand-washing, covering our coughs, and practicing physical distancing.

### **Launch of Canada COVID-19 app**

- Canadians need easy access to digital tools and resources to help them get the information they need about COVID-19.
- The Canada COVID-19 mobile application allows users to access trusted health resources and track COVID-19 symptoms daily.
- The latest updates about COVID-19 and how Canada is responding are available in real-time through the app with recommendations and resources that are personalized.
- This app builds on what provinces and territories are doing and provides another valuable resource for Canadians.
- Health Canada is continuing to work closely with provinces and territories, vendors and stakeholders to make additional tools widely available to Canadians and their families.
- The Canada COVID-19 app is a central resource to be used for accessing trusted, evidence-based information about the COVID-19 pandemic across Canada. It does not track personal information, nor is it a surveillance tool.
- The protection of Canadians information is a priority for the Government of Canada and any tool used to collect health care information would need to undergo a rigorous privacy assessment.

### **Federal funding**

- On March 11, the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced Canada's more than \$1- billion whole-of-government COVID-19 Response Fund.
- Funding provided to PHAC and Health Canada includes:
  - \$50 million for the Public Health Agency of Canada to support ongoing communications to keep Canadians informed and a national public education campaign to encourage the adoption of personal protective behaviours.
  - \$100 million to support federal public health measures such as enhanced surveillance, increased testing at the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) and ongoing support for preparedness in First Nations and Inuit communities.



- This is in addition to an initial \$50 million that was provided to support the immediate public health response.
- \$275 million to enhance our capacity to explore antivirals, develop vaccines and support clinical trials.
- This is in addition to the \$27 million for coronavirus research announced in early March through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which will support 47 research teams from across Canada.
- \$50 million to the Public Health Agency of Canada to support the purchase of personal protective equipment—such as surgical masks, face shields and gowns—and medical supplies to address federal needs and supplement stocks of the provinces and territories that require it.

***Funding to Kids Help Phone to meet increased demand for mental health services for children and youth in relation to COVID-19***

- The COVID-19 pandemic is new and unexpected. It is having a major impact on Canadians, including children and youth. Supporting the mental health and well-being of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic is a priority for the Government of Canada.
- With school closures and reduced access to community resources, Kids Help Phone is experiencing increased demand for its confidential 24/7 crises support services, which are available online, by telephone, and through text messaging.
- In response, the Government of Canada is providing \$7.5 million to Kids Help Phone to meet this increased demand and provide young people with the mental health support they need during this difficult time.
- This additional support will provide English and French e-mental health services to children and youth across Canada who are feeling the social and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will ensure that vulnerable Canadian youth and children can find the help they need when they need it most.
- This investment is an important first step in connecting Canadians to the mental health resources they need across the country.

**Temporary exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act for medical treatments**

- Many people with substance use disorder or who live with chronic pain may find it challenging to effectively practice physical distancing without changes to prescribing and dispensing practices. In this time of emergency measures, we must do everything we can to allow them to access the medicine they need.
- Health Canada is working with provinces and territories to take action to help patients and practitioners reduce their social interactions, without limiting access to critical medicine.



- On March 19, 2020, Health Canada issued a six-month national exemption for prescriptions of controlled substances (such as narcotics) under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and its regulations. This exemption temporarily authorizes pharmacists to prescribe, sell or provide controlled substances in limited circumstances, or to transfer prescriptions for controlled substances.
- As permitted by the laws and regulations of the province or territory in which the pharmacist is entitled to practice, this exemption will:
  - Permit pharmacists to extend and renew prescriptions;
  - Permit pharmacists to transfer prescriptions to other pharmacists; and
  - Allow pharmacy employees to deliver controlled substances to patients' homes or wherever they may be.
- To accommodate physical distancing, and to reduce the stress on emergency rooms and healthcare practitioners across Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic, the exemption also permits prescribers, including nurse practitioners, to temporarily issue verbal orders (i.e., over the phone) to extend or refill a prescription.
- The exemption will be in effect until September 30, 2020, but can be extended or ended earlier by Health Canada if required.
- Legislative or regulatory changes may be required in some provinces and territories in order to put in place these new activities for pharmacists and nurse practitioners. Health Canada recommends contacting your pharmacist or provincial or territorial regulatory authority to check when and if these activities are available in your area.
- The Government of Canada will continue to collaborate with our provincial and territorial partners to effectively implement the exemption, and to assess any additional barriers to Canadians' access to controlled substances for medical reasons during the pandemic.
- Health Canada issued a similar exemption during the Newfoundland and Labrador's 2020 snowstorm.

### **Risks to Canadians**

- COVID-19 is a serious health threat, and the situation is evolving daily.
- We are seeing an increasing number of cases in Canada and a number of provinces have reported cases with no links to travel. This is signal that there is some degree of community spread in Canada.
- Given the increasing number of cases and signs of community transmission, the risk to Canadians is considered high.
- This does not mean that all Canadians will get the disease.
- It means that there is a significant impact on the health care system already that could impact health care resources available to Canadians with or without COVID-19, if we do not flatten the epidemic curve now.



- The risk of severe illness and outcomes is higher for older adults and those of all ages with underlying medical conditions.
- This is why we are advising Canadians to stay home, if possible. If you must leave your home, practise physical distancing.
- Public health authorities across the country are working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and to reduce its impact.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada, along with provincial, territorial and community partners, continues to reassess the public health risk, based on the best available evidence as the situation evolves.
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### **COVID-19 Situational Dashboard**

- On April 4, the Government of Canada launched a new COVID-19 situational dashboard for Canada.
- The situation in Canada is changing rapidly and we are learning more about COVID-19 every day. Canadians need easy access to digital tools and resources to help them get the information they need about COVID-19.
- This dashboard provides Canadians and researchers with the latest COVID-19 data in a user-friendly format online so that they can better understand how the outbreak of COVID-19 is evolving in Canada.
- It provides an interactive overview of number of cases and deaths in Canada, including information on affected populations by age, sex and on how the outbreak is progressing over time.
- This tool does not provide any modelling or forecasting of what may occur in the coming weeks and months.
- New data is released daily by provincial and territorial officials. While the dashboard is continuously updated to reflect these new data, if there are any differences between the national case count and testing numbers reported by provincial and territorial public health officials, the provincial and territorial data should be considered the most up-to-date.



- The Government of Canada will continue to work collaboratively with partners at all levels of government to respond to COVID-19 and ensure that cases continue to be rapidly identified and managed in order to protect the health of Canadians.

## **Physical distancing**

- We are advising Canadians to stay home, if possible. If you must leave your home, practise physical distancing.
- Physical distancing is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak.
- You can practise physical distancing by making changes in your everyday routines to minimize close contact with others. For example:
  - increase physical distance with others to two arm lengths (or approximately two metres);
  - avoid crowded places;
  - shop and use public transit during off-peak hours; and
  - greet one another with a wave or elbow bump instead of a handshake, kiss or hug.
- To stay healthy and prevent the spread of respiratory and other illnesses is to:
  - wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - cough and sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands;
  - avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands;
  - avoid close contact with people who are sick; and
  - stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.
- There are simple, practical things you can do to prepare in case you or someone in your household becomes ill or if COVID-19 becomes common in your community.

While keeping a physical distance of 2 metres from others, you can:

- greet with a wave instead of a handshake, a kiss or a hug
  - use food delivery services or online shopping
  - ask family, a neighbor or friend to help with essential errands
  - exercise at home
  - go outside for some fresh air, a run, a bike ride, or to walk the dog
  - host online dinners and games with family and friends
  - use technology, such as video calls, to keep in touch with family and friends
  - work from home
  - get creative by drawing chalk art or running back yard obstacle courses and games
- Make a plan that includes:
  - Essential supplies (a few weeks' worth) on hand so you will not need to leave your home if you become ill.
  - Avoid panic buying. Add a few extra items to your cart every time you shop. This places less of a burden on suppliers, and can help ease financial burden on you as well.
  - Renew and refill your prescription medications.



- Alternative arrangements in case you become ill or if you need to care for a sick family member. For example:
  - Have backup childcare in case you or your usual care provider become ill.
  - If you care for dependents, have a backup caregiver in place.
  - Talk to your employer about working from home if possible.
- We are aware that the novel coronavirus can cause a range of mild to severe symptoms. It is possible that individuals will not recognize when they first develop symptoms, because they can be similar to a cold or flu.
- If you have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing) and suspect you may have COVID-19, contact a health professional before arriving in person so that the appropriate measures can be taken when you arrive.
- Do not go to a health care provider without calling ahead so that appropriate measures can be taken when you arrive.
- **Stay informed.** Go to credible sources for up-to-date information and advice:
  - the [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus) web page;
  - the national toll-free phone number (1-833-784-4397) for COVID-19;
  - Government of Canada Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn social media accounts; and
  - provincial, territorial and municipal government websites and social media accounts.

## **Order 8 – Mandatory Isolation and Quarantine (self-isolation)**

- We need to help as many Canadians as possible stay healthy and stop the spread of COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada is implementing an Emergency Order under the *Quarantine Act* that requires persons entering Canada—whether by air, sea or land—to isolate for 14 days if they have symptoms of COVID-19, or to quarantine (self-isolate) themselves for 14 days if they are asymptomatic in order to limit the introduction and spread of COVID-19.
- This Order is mandatory for anyone entering Canada on or after March 25, 2020.
- These additional measures will contribute to containing the outbreak and preventing further spread of COVID-19 in Canada.
- These measures will also help protect older adults and medically vulnerable people, who are at greatest risk of severe COVID-19 disease.

### **Symptomatic:**

- Any traveller with signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will not be allowed to use public transportation to travel to their place of isolation.
- In addition, no one who is symptomatic will be permitted to isolate in a place where they would be in contact with people who are particularly vulnerable, such as adults 65 or older and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions.



- If symptomatic individuals do not have private transportation or a place to isolate, they will be required to isolate for 14 days in a quarantine facility designated by the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada.
- If you start to develop symptoms within 14 days of your quarantine, you must:
  - isolate yourself from others as soon as you notice your first symptom
  - immediately call a health care professional or public health authority
  - describe your symptoms and travel history to them
  - follow their instructions carefully

### **Asymptomatic:**

- Travellers who arrive and do not have symptoms may proceed to their final destination and then quarantine (self isolate) themselves for 14 days. These travellers are still at risk of developing symptoms and infecting others.
- Asymptomatic travellers may take public transportation but must not make any stops on the way home and practice physical distancing at all times.
- To quarantine (self-isolate), take the following measures:
  - Limit contact with others:
    - stay at home; (do not leave your property)
    - Only leave your home for medically necessary appointments (use private transportation for this purpose)
    - Do not go to school, work, other public areas or use public transportation (e.g., buses, taxis).
    - Do not have visitors.
    - Avoid contact with older adults, or those with medical conditions, who are at a higher risk of developing serious illness.
    - Avoid contact with others, especially those who have not travelled or been exposed to the virus.
- If contact cannot be avoided, take the following precautions:
  - keep at least 2 metres between yourself and the other person
  - keep interactions brief
  - stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom, if possible
- Things you can do while in quarantine (self-isolation)
  - While keeping a physical distance of 2 metres from others, you can:
  - greet with a wave instead of a handshake, a kiss or a hug
  - ask family, a neighbor or friend to help with essential errands (e.g., picking up prescriptions, buying groceries)
  - use food delivery services or online shopping
  - exercise at home
  - use technology, such as video calls, to keep in touch with family and friends through online dinners and games
  - work from home
  - on your own property only: go outside on your balcony or deck, walk in your yard or get creative by drawing chalk art or running back yard obstacle courses and games



### **If pressed on enforcement**

- Spot checks will be conducted by the Government of Canada to verify compliance.
- Failure to comply with this Order is an offence under the *Quarantine Act*. The maximum penalties include a fine of up to \$750,000 and/or imprisonment for six months. Further, a person who causes a risk of imminent death or serious bodily harm to another person while wilfully or recklessly contravening this Act or the regulations could be liable for a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or to imprisonment of up to three years, or to both.

### **If pressed on measures**

- The Government of Canada is implementing the Emergency Order under the *Quarantine Act*.
- The decision was made following consultation with the provinces and territories.
- The Government of Canada will continue to work closely with local, provincial, territorial and international partners to limit the introduction of COVID-19 and prevent further spread across the country.

### **Exemptions to self-isolation**

- The continued global movement of goods and the ongoing delivery of essential services will be important for Canada's response to COVID-19.
- Certain persons who cross the border regularly to ensure the continued flow of goods and essential services, or individuals who receive or provide other essential services to Canadians, are exempt from the Order, as long as they are asymptomatic (do not have symptoms of COVID-19).
- Individuals exempt from the Order must practise physical distancing and self monitor for symptoms, stay in their place of residence as much as possible, and follow the instructions of their local public health authority if they feel sick.
- An exemption to the request to self-isolate for 14 days should be provided to workers who are essential to the movement of goods and people. For example, this exemption would apply to:
  - healthy workers in the trade and transportation sector who are important for the movement of goods and people across the border, such as truck drivers and crew on any plane, train or marine vessel crossing the border
  - healthy people who have to cross the border to go to work, including health care providers and critical infrastructure workers

Workers in these sectors should:

- practise physical distancing (maintain a distance of 2 metres from others)
- closely **self-monitor**
- self-isolate should they exhibit any symptoms
- It is recommended that employers in these sectors conduct active daily monitoring of their staff for COVID-19 symptoms (checking for cough, fever or shortness of breath).
- Be aware that local public health authorities at the workers' point of destination in Canada may have specific requirements. For example, for those working in the health care sector



and others who are likely to come into close contact with high-risk groups for COVID-19.

### **Expectations of the Number of Cases to Come and Enforcing Isolation and Quarantine (Self-Isolation)**

***For questions regarding at what point Canada should expect to see a decrease in the number of cases and what additional measures could be enacted if case numbers don't go down***

- It is important to note that the number of cases we are seeing today reflect events that happened a week or two ago.
- Consequently, we expect to see more cases in the weeks to come as more testing is available and travellers abroad return home.
- We are continually analyzing the data that are available to identify changes and evolving risks to Canadians.
- It is crucial that Canadians continue to stay home, if possible, and to practice physical distancing and hand and respiratory hygiene practices at all times.
- It is up to all of us to slow the spread of this virus and protect the most vulnerable in our communities. In order for these measures to be effective and eventually help to decrease the daily rate and overall number of new cases, we must continue to follow public health guidance and collectively take action to help protect the health and safety of all Canadians.

***For questions regarding whether Canada would ever consider fining or arresting individuals who are not following the advice to self-isolate***

- We are asking Canadians to **do the right thing** and to continue to stay home, if possible, and to practice physical distancing if they leave their home.
- Canadians need to understand the role that they play personally and the potential risk that they may have been exposed to the virus during any travel outside the country and the risk that they in turn may pose to other Canadians including the most vulnerable.
- Canadians need to also respect any guidance given to them by local public health and, if they are sick, they need to stay home.
- The failure to comply is a real concern. Individuals who are asked to self-isolate should take this seriously and stay home. If there is a need to leave home for food and/or medication, efforts should be made to ask a friend or family member to help out.
- For Canadians not self-isolating, there will continue to be the need to leave their homes for essential items like food and medication. As long as individuals do not have COVID-19 symptoms, people can also continue to get fresh air and exercise outdoors while practicing physical distancing.



- This will help protect older adults and medically vulnerable people who are at greatest risk of severe COVID-19 disease. We need to help as many Canadians as possible to stay healthy.

**If pressed:**

- There are some very powerful measures under the Quarantine Acts within every level of government, to help enforce measures to protect the healthy and safety of Canadians. A number of provinces and territories have put in place mandatory self-isolation orders.
- Such extreme action could take place, but we are not at that point and we continue to expect Canadians to help their neighbours, friends and family by continuing to stay at home as much as possible, wash their hands often and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

**Criteria for individuals to discontinue home isolation after COVID-19 symptoms**

- Based on the latest science and in consultation with provincial and territorial experts, we have updated the guidance on when individuals can end a period of home isolation following the presence of COVID-19 symptoms.
- The new guidance recommends that an individual in home isolation, who had symptoms consistent with COVID-19, can end home isolation a minimum of 10 days after the onset of their first symptoms, provided they are feeling better and do not have a fever.
- The 10 day minimum is based on when these people are no longer expected to be able to spread the virus to others. Some people can have a persistent cough after an illness like COVID-19 and we do not want to keep them isolated longer than necessary.
- This new guidance means that an individual on home isolation no longer needs to have two negative COVID-19 tests 24 hours apart once they no longer exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- This change does not apply to hospitalized patients.
- Provinces and territories may impose a longer period of isolation.
- Individuals who work in health care settings may need to meet additional requirements, as set out by their employer or provincial/territorial jurisdiction, before they are able to return to their workplace.
- Everyone has to contribute to reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada and flattening the curve. Using tried and true measures such as continuing to practise physical distancing once home isolation has ended will help our overall public health efforts and protect Canada's most vulnerable people.

**If pressed on why the criteria are being changed**

- Across Canada, we need to strategically use laboratory testing resources.



- This change to the approach for laboratory testing will help ensure the best use of limited health and laboratory resources.
- Not all persons on home isolation with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 require a laboratory test to confirm or rule out infection, provided they adhere to strict home isolation guidance.
- The updated criteria will allow the provinces and territories to recommend a period of home isolation for individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 without requiring multiple laboratory tests.

#### **If pressed on how the time period was decided upon**

- The research and data on COVID-19 continues to grow and evolve.
- One unpublished study found that when scientists tried to find live virus in specimens from people who had COVID-19, no live virus could be found by the eighth day after onset of illness/symptoms. When these same people were tested using a different test (polymerase chain reaction (PCR)) several of them still came up as positive because that test can detect both live and dead virus.
- This means some people can test positive even though they are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others.
- In the absence of a large amount of conclusive data, a minimum of 10 days of home isolation is an appropriate recommendation at this time.

#### **If pressed on whether the new criteria are more or less stringent than previous criteria**

- The new guidance replaces the current, more stringent and resource intensive, requirement for individuals to receive two negative tests before being allowed to end home isolation.

### **Long-term Care Facilities**

- We are extremely saddened to hear of the tragic deaths linked to COVID-19 in several seniors' homes in Canada, including most recently at a facility in Bobcaygeon, Ontario.
- We all need do our part to help stop the spread of the virus among the residents of long-term care facilities, as well as the workers who care for them.
- We are calling on all Canadians to help protect older adults and medically vulnerable people who are at greatest risk of severe health complications linked to COVID-19.
- The risk of severe illness and outcomes is higher for older adults and for those of all ages with underlying medical conditions.



- The Government of Canada commends the staff working at long-term care homes in these challenging conditions. Their efforts and dedication in the face of this will go far to improve the lives of those in homes.
- We strongly advise that no one visit long-term care facilities at this time. For the sake of the residents and staff, stay away from these facilities.
- We understand that the efforts of Canadians to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our most vulnerable involves difficult decisions and personal sacrifices.
- Health workers should absolutely not go to work if they have symptoms because they have direct contact with the most vulnerable of our society who are at highest risk of severe illness.
- Given the increasing number of cases and signs of community transmission, we have been advising Canadians to stay home.

#### **If pressed on public health guidance for long-term care and assisted-living facilities**

- Long-term care and assisted living facilities should maintain a high level of vigilance to ensure that staff do not report to work with symptoms.
- Staff should be screened before every shift, and any staff member developing symptoms during a shift should be managed immediately.
- If visitation is required, visitors should be screened for fever, cough or difficulty breathing, and prevented from entering.
- Emergency first responders, in response to emergency situations, should be permitted entry without screening.
- Many facilities have already implemented measures, such as barring visitation or other non-essential on-site services.
- Where possible, non-essential outings for residents should be discontinued.
- These facilities should also follow the recommendations for preventing transmission of infections, including COVID-19, in long-term care and assisted-living facilities developed by the relevant provincial or territorial health authority.

#### **Mass gatherings**

- Mass gatherings occur in a range of public places such as spiritual and cultural settings, theatres, sports arenas, festivals and conference halls.
- They result in a large number of people being in close contact for an extended period of time.



- The Public Health Agency of Canada advises that gatherings of 50 people or more should be cancelled or postponed.
- Organizers should consult their local public health authorities who may set other criteria depending on specific circumstances.
- Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions should reconsider attending gatherings. This includes large gatherings and even smaller events in crowded or enclosed settings.
- If you have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing), do not attend a mass gathering, event or places where people gather. You could put someone whose health is vulnerable at risk.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada has posted a risk-informed decision-making [tool](#) on [Canada.ca/coronavirus](#) to help public health authorities and event organizers work together to determine public health risks and actions for mass gatherings.
- If the virus causing COVID-19 spreads within a community, individuals may also consider avoiding non-essential gatherings, running errands outside of peak hours and increasing physical distance with others to 2 metres, where possible.

### **Surveillance for COVID-19**

- Canada's health system has been on high alert to detect possible COVID-19 cases for many weeks.
- Frontline health providers and laboratories have been vigilantly triaging and testing possible cases. Public health authorities have carried out detailed investigations and contact tracing on all confirmed cases to rule out the possibility of community spread.
- Canada is stepping up our preparedness and response approach, based on the latest and best evidence available, to meet the challenges posed by this evolving outbreak.
- At this time, Canada remains focussed on containment efforts to delay and slow the spread of COVID-19. We do this by rapidly identifying cases, meticulously finding close contacts and using proven public health measures such as isolation and recommending that Canadians practise physical distancing, which means increasing physical distance with others to 2 metres, where possible.
- In the event of community transmission, these actions will continue as long as feasible to interrupt chains of transmission in the community and to delay and reduce outbreak activity where possible.
- In addition, the rapid spread of the COVID-19 outbreak to, and within, countries around the world reinforces the priority we are placing on expanding surveillance in Canada.
- This will increase our ability to detect cases that could signify possible community spread in Canada, and assist public health authorities in taking rapid and targeted action to interrupt spread and delay and reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreaks.



- Canada has a highly integrated federal, provincial and territorial approach to surveillance, involving front-line healthcare settings and laboratories across the country that have effectively equipped us to detect respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.
- Public health laboratories across Canada are also working together to report COVID-19 test results weekly. These reports will allow us to monitor where COVID-19 is occurring, which can provide us with an early signal of potential clusters that can indicate community spread.
- Hospital surveillance is another important area for detection of COVID-19. These sites allow us to monitor for people with respiratory symptoms, including those with pneumonia or severe infections, even if they have not travelled to an affected country. This is another means of broadening the scope of our surveillance to identify signals of potential community spread so that public health authorities can take appropriate action.
- Finally, Canada has established networks of paediatricians and family doctors that are essential to surveillance. These networks include providers at the front line of primary care, who are often the first to detect new or unexpected patterns of illness that may be a first alert to an emerging health concern.
- It is by bringing data together from all these sources that we can detect signals and investigate transmission patterns to closely monitor the potential emergence and spread of COVID-19 in communities across Canada.

## **Testing**

### ***Testing incidents under investigation***

- Our top priority is the health and safety of Canadians.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Lab (NML) in Winnipeg is performing diagnostic testing for the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The NML is working in close collaboration with provincial and territorial public health laboratories to ensure that persons under investigation for the novel coronavirus are confirmed or ruled out through laboratory testing.
- Multiple provincial public health laboratories can now test for the novel coronavirus with a very high degree of accuracy.
- BC, AB, SK, ON, QC are able to confirm laboratory diagnostics for the virus that causes COVID-19. For all other provinces, their results undergo additional testing at NML because this is a previously unknown virus and it is good practice to use additional tests to provide further confirmation of initial laboratory findings.
- Presumptive positive cases that are identified through provincial/territorial testing are managed from a public health and infection control perspective in the same manner as confirmed cases.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is in close contact with provincial and territorial counterparts.



- We will keep Canadians informed as the situation evolves.

### ***Coronavirus test kits***

- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Lab (NML) works in close collaboration with provincial and territorial public health laboratories to ensure that persons under investigation for COVID-19 are confirmed or ruled out through laboratory testing.
- Provinces and territories are using the testing approach developed and validated by the NML.
- Furthermore, provincial lab results undergo quality assurance testing at the NML.

### ***Testing individuals***

- Testing for the novel coronavirus in symptomatic individuals has clear clinical and public health value, but the same is not true for testing asymptomatic persons.
- Canada has and will continue to test all symptomatic individuals, as part of our evidence-based approach, while considering the evolving science on other testing scenarios. As the science evolves, our approach will keep pace, and policies and protocols will be updated accordingly.
- The value of testing asymptomatic individuals is unclear. Canada has and will continue to take a measured, evidence-based approach to all of these critical decision points around some of the key unknowns on COVID-19.
- One thing that is clear in our approach is that we test all symptomatic individuals and our threshold for that has been very low.
- It is important to understand that this is not a simple or straightforward issue, and the science is not clear.
- Testing asymptomatic individuals offers a false sense of reassurance, because it does not mean that an individual will not go on to become symptomatic and develop disease within the incubation period. The timing of testing matters. This is why we took the precaution to quarantine individuals again in Canada. There is a real assurance in monitoring for the 14-day incubation period and that means more for preventing spread than a potentially false negative test result.
- In addition, if an asymptomatic individual was tested and the test was positive, it is not clear what the significance and implications are. A positive test could mean presence of virus genetic material was detected, but that does not mean the person is necessarily infectious to others.

### ***Why asymptomatic people are not being tested for COVID-19:***

- It is important to focus on testing the right people at the right time.



- Testing in Canada is focused on people who present with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- Testing people who are asymptomatic is not considered an effective approach to detecting and preventing the spread of this virus and may give a false sense of reassurance.
- Most individuals tested to date have had symptoms and a history of travel, or contact with a traveller, to a known affected country.
- More recently, all travellers returning from any destination outside of Canada are being advised to monitor their symptoms. If they experience symptoms, they are asked to isolate themselves and contact their public health authority or health care provider who will determine whether they need further health assessment and testing.
- In addition, we are expanding testing for people without travel history by including testing of COVID-19 for patients who are already being tested for other respiratory viruses.
- This approach will help bolster our response by helping us quickly detect and monitor any potential community spread of COVID-19.

## **Virus epidemiology**

- In Canada, and around the world, researchers are actively investigating all aspects of the novel coronavirus outbreak to further understand this disease and how the outbreak may progress.
- Canada is following the guidance of the WHO, which recommends a quarantine period of two weeks (14 days).
- The WHO noted on February 10, 2020, that it is not considering changing its recommended quarantine time.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has cautioned that a 24-day incubation period could be an outlier or an unrecognized second exposure. An unrecognized second exposure is a situation where an individual already recognized as having been exposed to the virus is exposed to the virus again but this second exposure is not recognized. If they develop illness due to the second exposure it may mistakenly appear like the incubation period is longer than 14 days because the “clock” was not “re-set” at the time of the second exposure.
- To date, there has been no verified data to suggest the incubation period extends beyond 14 days. The report from China requires careful review to establish whether the finding is valid.
- PHAC is an active participant in a number of expert groups that are examining how the disease is transmitted, developing models to predict how it may spread, and developing guidance for infection prevention and control based on the most recent information.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) continues to liaise with international partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), to better understand the epidemiology of this disease.



## **Hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin for the treatment of COVID-19**

- Canadians and their families who are ill with COVID-19 need access to safe and effective drugs and to health products for diagnosis and treatment.
- There has been some preliminary evidence from studies suggesting that, hydroxychloroquine alone or a combination of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin, may be effective in reducing the viral load in patients with COVID-19, as well as in treating respiratory tract infections related to COVID-19.
- Evidence on the effectiveness of using hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin in combination to treat COVID-19 is still very limited, and like all medications, both drugs are associated with known risks.
- Preliminary evidence from one study suggests that a combination of two drugs, hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin, may be effective in reducing the possibility of side effects.
- Because the use of these medications to treat COVID-19 is in its early experimental stage, Health Canada encourages healthcare practitioners prescribing these therapies for COVID-19 patients to contact the Department to initiate a clinical trial.
- A clinical trial requires the informed consent of patients and would enable the healthcare community to systematically collect information about the risks and benefits of the treatment.
- All clinical trials related to the treatment of COVID-19 are being reviewed on a priority basis.
- Both hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin have been approved in Canada for the treatment of other diseases. A Healthcare practitioner may choose to use these medications off-label based on his/her patient's needs including the seriousness of the patient's illness if the potential benefits outweigh the known risks of the drugs.
- Health Canada encourages any company or healthcare practitioner interested in conducting a clinical trial to evaluate the effectiveness of these or other drugs to contact Health Canada.
- To facilitate faster access to potential therapies or vaccines for COVID-19, Health Canada will expedite its reviews of any COVID-19 related health product submissions and clinical trial applications.

### **If pressed on the availability of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin:**

- Health Canada is closely monitoring the supply of potential treatments for COVID-19 in Canada, including hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin.
- There are four companies that currently market hydroxychloroquine in Canada: Apotex Inc., JAMP Pharma Corporation, Mint Pharmaceuticals Inc., and Sanofi-Aventis Canada Inc. Health Canada understands that all four companies are experiencing increased demand. However, at this time, only Apotex Inc. is reporting a shortage due to an increase in demand, with an anticipated end date of April 15, 2020.



- In addition to closely being in contact with all four companies, Health Canada will take any necessary actions in collaboration with the companies, provinces and territories, and other stakeholders to help ensure continued supply in Canada.
- There are 16 companies that currently market azithromycin in Canada: Altamed Pharma, Angita Pharma Inc., Apotex Inc., Auro Pharma Inc., Dominion Pharmacal, JAMP Pharma Corporation, Laboratoire Riva Inc., Marcan Pharmaceuticals Inc, Pharmascience Inc., Pro Doc Limitee, Sandoz Canada Incorporated, Sanis Health Inc., Sivem Pharmaceuticals ULC, Sterimax Inc., Teva Canada Incorporated and Pfizer Canada ULC. None of these companies are reporting shortages of azithromycin in Canada.

## **Drugs and vaccines**

- When a vaccine or drug is developed to prevent or treat COVID-19, we will take appropriate action to ensure its availability to Canadians.
- Measures include fast-tracking through the:
  - scientific review of new drugs or vaccines through a priority review or a notice of compliance with conditions
  - use of the Extraordinary Use of New Drugs pathway for making a promising new drug or vaccine available in order to secure the health of Canadians during an emergency
  - Canadian clinical trials for new vaccines, new or repurposed antivirals, or supportive therapies
- Other measures include the:
  - Special Access Program for practitioners treating patients with serious or life-threatening conditions when conventional therapies have failed or are unavailable
  - importation of a new drug authorized for sale in the United States, Switzerland or the European Union through the list of drugs for an urgent public health need,

## **Canadian hospitals to join global drug trials**

- COVID-19 is a global pandemic that requires a global solution.
- The participation of countries, including Canada in this unprecedented mega-trial to test potential treatments for COVID-19, is truly a new model for global collaboration.
- This global trial coordinated by the World Health Organization will test multiple potential drugs to treat COVID-19. By using a common study design across countries, it ensures that results can be obtained more rapidly and be more robust.
- As with any unproven therapy, there are potential harms as well as benefits. Therefore, all potential therapies are best accessed through a clinical trial.
- The Government of Canada has invested nearly \$1 million through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to support the Canadian portion of this global trial. This is part of our \$275 million commitment towards supporting medical research for the COVID-19 pandemic.



- Canada is home to some of the most skilled and brightest researchers in the world who are working hard to support international efforts to fight this pandemic. The Canadian portion of this global trial plans to recruit up to 20 sites across Canada.
- To help advance research and vaccine development for COVID-19, the World Health Organization, along with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, is coordinating an international collaboration in which Canada is participating.

## **Supplies and medical devices**

### ***Personal protective equipment***

- There are global challenges securing personal protective equipment - that's masks, gowns and diagnostic tests.
- Urgent work is underway with provinces and territories to bulk order supplies and get them where they are needed.
- We are pulling out all the stops from bulk ordering to expediting delivery.
- We have issued an industry-wide call out so that we are in constant touch with suppliers on Canada's requirements.
- Canadians can be assured that Canada is working non-stop on all fronts to provide essential supplies.
- As an emergency public health measure, Canada is expediting access to medical devices.
- Canada needs 7 million masks immediately and we have commitments from suppliers to meet most of that requirement.
- Canada has secured near-term supply of swabs for the next week and are taking steps to secure a very significant supply for all provinces and territories.

### ***Interim Order Respecting Drugs, Medical Devices and Foods for a Special Dietary Purpose in relation to COVID-19***

- The current COVID-19 pandemic is having a major impact on Canadians and on the health care system. It is critical to ensure the Government of Canada can effectively respond to the needs of those affected.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister of Health has signed an Interim Order to help prevent and alleviate shortages—of drugs, medical devices, and foods for a special dietary purpose—resulting directly or indirectly from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The provision will allow products that are not approved in Canada to be imported and sold in Canada effective immediately, subject to certain requirements.



- As with all drugs and medical devices, Health Canada will assess and monitor the safety, quality, and effectiveness of all products allowed for import and sale under this Interim Order. Drug and medical device manufacturers will be required to follow strict monitoring requirements.
- The Interim Order will also require companies manufacturing and importing critical medical devices during the COVID-19 pandemic to report actual or anticipated shortages, similar to what is currently required for drugs. This will help the health system to plan and reallocate supplies as needed to help ensure continued access for Canadians.
- In addition, the Interim Order will enable faster market access for hard surface disinfectants and certain hand sanitizers.
- Together, these actions will support access to the drugs, medical devices, and foods for a special dietary purpose that Canadians need to stay healthy and safe, and help those who are ill to recover.

#### **Key Messages on the Legislative Amendments:**

- To assist in Canada's response to COVID-19, these new legislative amendments will give the Minister of Health new powers to:
  - make regulations to help prevent or alleviate shortages of drugs and medical devices;
  - seek additional information from companies who produce food, drugs, cosmetics or medical devices to assess the risks and benefits of the new products, and to confirm that these products are safe for Canadians; and
  - seek authorization for third-party manufacturers to supply needed patented inventions, such as a medication or medical equipment, to the extent needed to address this pandemic.
- These measures received Royal Assent on March 25, 2020, and took effect immediately.
- The amendments to the *Food and Drug Act* and the Commissioner of Patents' ability to issue authorizations will remain in place until September 30, 2020.
- Health Canada is committed to taking necessary action to continue to protect the health and safety of Canadians during this pandemic and will take any necessary actions in collaboration with the provinces and territories and other stakeholders to help protect the supply of needed medications and medical devices in Canada.

#### **On how these changes work with the *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act (Vanessa's Law)*:**

- These amendments complement the powers received through *Vanessa's Law* by:
  - Providing the authority to gather additional safety information to inform decisions about new products being brought on to the Canadian market or that are already on the market; and



- expanding the scope of powers to other potential new products, including cosmetics and foods for special dietary purposes that may be needed to help address shortages during this pandemic.

### ***Expediting access to hand sanitizers, hard surface disinfectants, personal protective equipment and swabs***

- Health Canada's top priority is the health and safety of Canadians.
- In light of the unprecedented demand and urgent need for products that can help limit the spread of COVID-19, Health Canada is facilitating access to products that may not fully meet current regulatory requirements, as an interim measure.
- This includes hand sanitizers, hard-surface disinfectants and personal protective equipment (such as masks and gowns), as well as swabs.
- For example, Health Canada will allow certain products of these types to be sold in Canada without being fully compliant to regulatory requirements, including:
  - products that are already authorized for sale in Canada but are not fully compliant with Health Canada's bilingual labelling requirements (e.g., labelling in only one official language, different packaging from what was authorized); and
  - products that are not authorized for sale in Canada, but are authorized or registered in other jurisdictions with similar regulatory frameworks and quality assurances.
- Health Canada is also expediting approvals of products, as well as establishment and site licences related to these types of products.
- Health Canada is working with Public Services and Procurement Canada, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development to identify manufacturers and facilitate rapid access to these necessary products.
- Health Canada is strongly committed to ensuring the safety of products, including products brought to Canada through these measures.
- The Department will continue to update Canadians on any further efforts to increase supplies of health products that may be used to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Interim Order Respecting COVID-19-related Medical Devices***

- Our top priority is the health and safety of Canadians.
- Early diagnosis is critical to slowing and reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada.
- As an emergency public health measure, the Minister of Health has signed an Interim Order to allow expedited access to COVID-19-related medical devices.
- With the Interim Order, two new diagnostic tests are made readily accessible in Canada:
  - the Roche Molecular Systems Inc. cobas SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic device; and
  - the ThermoFisher Scientific TaqPath™ COVID-19 Combo Kit



- An Interim Order is one of the fastest mechanisms available to the Government of Canada to help make health products available to help address larger-scale, public health emergency situations.

**If pressed on the US directive to allow unauthorized health products:**

- Health Canada will continue to use all tools at its disposal to expedite supply of safe and effective health products related to COVID-19. However, the department is not providing blanket approval of unauthorized drugs or devices. We will update Canadians with any new information as it arises.
- The Interim Order will also ensure that other COVID-19-related medical devices are available to treat, mitigate, or prevent COVID-19, as necessary.

**If pressed on Cost Recovery:**

- To remove impediments for manufacturers in this time of public health need, Health Canada will waive all application fees for COVID-19 medical devices subject to this Interim Order.

***National Emergency Strategic Stockpile***

- Canada's National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) contains supplies that provinces and territories can request in emergencies, such as infectious disease outbreaks, natural disasters and other public health events, when their own resources are not enough.
- These supplies include a variety of items such as medical equipment and supplies, pharmaceuticals, and social service supplies, such as beds and blankets.
- Provinces and territories are responsible for preparing and maintaining their own supply capacities.
- The purpose of the NESS is to help supplement provincial and territorial resources during a rare or high-impact public health event.

***Procurement of medical supplies***

- The Government of Canada continues to work with provincial and territorial partners to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, the Government announced \$50M towards the purchase of personal protective equipment and other necessary medical supplies and equipment.
- Internationally we have seen a tightening of supply. Federal, provincial and territorial governments continue to work together to promote the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, assess potential shortfalls, identify priority items and collaborate on procurement.
- The federal government is continuing to work aggressively to secure necessary equipment in real time, in direct collaboration with all provinces and territories. I understand the urgency



of this, and I want to assure you that we are working expeditiously, in close collaboration with industry, to identify suppliers to meet our shared needs.

- Products are being sourced from a number of suppliers from a number of countries. Procurement efforts will support the ramping up and building of domestic capacity, protecting middle-class jobs and securing long-term investment in Canada. We're also taking steps to build Canadian industrial capacity in real time to serve our needs for the short and long terms. These efforts will help keep Canadians safe and healthy, while also ensuring a reliable domestic supply over the years to come.
- Regulatory review and approval timelines will be accelerated to ensure that personal protective equipment is readily available for our frontline healthcare workers – we are committed to expediting the review of products and safe alternatives, while maintaining the health and safety that our regulatory system is based on.

### **Masks and PPE Re-Use**

- N95 masks are single-use products. Scientists at the Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory along with collaborators at the University of Manitoba and Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre conducted important research to assess whether these masks could be decontaminated and potentially reused.
- In a laboratory setting, our scientists were able to successfully decontaminate N95 masks using four different approaches while maintaining the structural and protective properties of the masks.
- It is important to note that the virus used in the decontamination experiment was not the virus that causes COVID-19. Research studies are currently underway to assess this approach using the virus that causes COVID-19 and results are anticipated in the coming days. (As of April 2, 2020)
- This is promising preliminary research that, if proven successful against the COVID-19 virus, could help protect the diminishing supply of critical personal protective equipment.
- This is an example of important scientific work that draws on the ingenuity of talented scientists in finding solutions to the challenges presented by COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada encourages scientific research that enhances Canada's ability to fight COVID-19.

#### **If Pressed:**

- Four different N95 respirator masks were assessed using standard autoclaving, ethylene oxide gassing, ionized hydrogen peroxide fogging, and vaporized hydrogen peroxide treatment.

### **Key Messages on Masks and PPE**



- Based on needs identified by provinces and territories, collaborative federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) procurement efforts are focused on procurement of large quantities of N95 masks, surgical masks, face shields, nitrile gloves, gowns and other protective clothing, sanitizer, ventilators, and testing supplies.
- Small quantities of PPE supply are starting to arrive through the collaborative FPT procurement efforts and will be distributed to provinces and territories.
- To address immediate short-term needs, the Public Health Agency of Canada deploys PPE and ventilators to provinces and territories based on requests for assistance.
- Discussions are continuing within the Government of Canada (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada) to explore alternative PPE supply routes and to scale up domestic production.
- For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada is working with Public Services and Procurement Canada to finalize a long-term agreement with Medicom for the domestic production of masks. In the meantime, Medicom is shipping 8,500,000 surgical masks this week. Additional supply is anticipated next week.
- Canada Goose received its medical device establishment licence from Health Canada to proceed with the retooling of its manufacturing facility to enable it to make gowns.

### ***Re-Use of Single-Use Medical Devices***

- As with other hospital-based practices, the purchase and use of reprocessed devices by individual healthcare facilities falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction.
- Given shortages of some critical medical devices due to COVID-19, Health Canada is working on guidance for the cleaning and sterilization of single-use devices.
- Additional urgent measures have also been taken by the Government of Canada in the last few weeks to support access to new COVID-19 diagnostic tests and hand sanitizers, disinfectants, personal protective equipment, and swabs for diagnosis.

### ***Existing Guidance***

- In May 2016, Health Canada published a notice to industry on re-use of single-use medical devices.
- Companies that reprocess and distribute medical devices originally authorized and labelled for single use to Canadian healthcare facilities will be held to the same Health Canada requirements as manufacturers of new devices.



- This means they must meet requirements for licensing, quality system management, labelling, investigating and handling complaints, maintaining distribution records, conducting recalls, reporting incidents and informing Health Canada of any changes to the information in their licence application.
- Reprocessed devices should clearly identify the reprocessor and contain instructions for safe reuse, such as how or by whom the device should be reprocessed. In addition, the single-use symbol should be removed from the label.
- As with other hospital-based practices, the purchase and use of reprocessed devices by individual healthcare facilities falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

## **Border measures**

- The Government of Canada continues to introduce border measures to limit the introduction and spread of COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada has multiple systems in place to prepare for, detect and limit the spread of infectious disease, including COVID-19, in Canada.
- The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is working closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to help prevent the spread of 2019 novel coronavirus into Canada at all international ports of entry.
- PHAC is responsible for advising the CBSA of any required enhanced measures to be implemented at the Canadian border to help prevent the spread of serious infectious diseases into Canada.
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents and Registered Indians under the *Indian Act* continue to enter Canada by right, and are subject to COVID-19 entry screening measures.
- To protect Canadians and to ease the potential burden non-essential travellers could place on our health care system and its frontline workers, the CBSA has implemented new travel restrictions across all ports of entry in all modes of transportation – land, sea, air and rail.
- A travel ban is currently in place for most people entering Canada\*, including:
  - All foreign nationals entering Canada by air;
  - All travellers from the U.S., across all modes, for recreation and/or tourism purposes;
  - Foreign nationals entering Canada if they arrive from a foreign country other than the United States, with some exceptions, including temporary foreign workers and international students; and,
  - Foreign nationals entering from the U.S. with signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

*\*There are exceptions to these bans that are spelled out in the Orders in Council.*



- Canada and the US have also entered into a reciprocal arrangement to direct back all asylum seekers. Exceptions may be made for unique circumstances, such as an unaccompanied minor.
- All persons entering Canada – no matter their country of origin or mode of entry - are REQUIRED to self-isolate for 14 days.
- There are exemptions in place on mandatory self-isolation to ensure that critical infrastructure, essential services and economic supply chains continue between Canada and the USA. Workers who are critical to our economy and infrastructure will be permitted to enter Canada, including truck drivers, firefighters and medical workers.
- Cross-border supply chains are vital to ensure the continued flow of goods, including food and medical supplies for all Canadians. As such, the CBSA is working with other federal partners to share information with commercial stakeholders to provide assurances that commercial traffic is not impeded.

***Update to existing Order in Councils 7 and 9 - Order in Council Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition of entry into Canada from any country other than the United States) and Order in Council Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition of entry into Canada from the United States)***

- Foreign nationals allowed entry into Canada will now include temporary foreign workers, some students and persons delivering urgent medical supplies.
- All foreign nationals permitted to enter Canada are required to meet the requirements of the Emergency Orders made under the *Quarantine Act*, including mandatory isolation for 14 days upon entering Canada except where specifically exempted. They must also follow local and provincial/territorial health emergency orders.
- Exempted persons are not permitted to enter Canada if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 coronavirus disease, or if they seek to enter Canada for optional or discretionary purposes.
- Foreign temporary workers are required for the continued resilience of our food and supplies sectors to ensure that Canadians have access to food and essential products during this pandemic.
- Order *Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition of entry into Canada from any country other than the United States)* has effect for the period beginning at noon Eastern Daylight Time on March 18, 2020, and ending at noon Eastern Daylight Time on June 30, 2020.
- Order *Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition of entry into Canada from the United States)* has effect for the period beginning at 00:00:01 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on March 21, 2020, and ending at 00:00:01 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on April 21, 2020.
- These two Orders are complementary in that they work together for the period when they overlap.



- These measures will help prevent the spread of disease in Canada while ensuring that essential travel and the supply chain of goods are not interrupted.
- Failure to comply with these Orders is an offense under the *Quarantine Act*. Maximum penalties include a fine of up to \$750,000 and/or imprisonment for six months. Further, a person who causes a risk of imminent death or serious bodily harm to another person while willfully or recklessly contravening this Act or the regulations could be liable for a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or imprisonment of up to three years, or to both.

#### *General message regarding essential travel of foreign nationals to Canada via the United States*

- Essential travel will continue unimpeded. Both governments recognize the importance of preserving vital supply chains between the two countries. These supply chains ensure that food, fuel and life-saving medicines reach people on both sides of the border.

#### *If pressed*

Foreign nationals who are permitted to enter into Canada include:

- A person with a valid work permit or application that was approved under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*
- A person with a valid study permit who received approval under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* before March 18, 2020
- A person permitted to work in Canada as a student in a health field under paragraph 186(p) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations*
- A person whose application for permanent residence was approved under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* before March 18, 2020
- Immediate family members of Canadian citizens or of a permanent resident
- A person registered as an Indian under the *Indian Act*
- Persons authorized by consular services for purposes of reuniting with immediate family
- Conveyance crews (e.g., air, boat, etc.) or workers on marine vessels
- Diplomats
- Persons invited by Canada to assist with Canada's COVID-19 response
- Persons on military flights or other Canadian-military support protected persons
- French citizens who reside in Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon and have been only in Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, the United States or Canada during the period of 14 days before the day on which they arrived in Canada
- Those whose presence in Canada is in the national interest as it pertains to public safety and emergency preparedness
- Persons providing essential services, or are essential for the movement of goods such as truck drivers and marine transportation
- Emergency workers
- Licensed health care professionals with proof of employment in Canada
- Persons who enter Canada for the purpose of delivering, maintaining, or repairing medically-necessary equipment or devices
- Persons who enter Canada for the purpose of making medical deliveries of cells, blood and blood products, tissues, organs or other body parts, that are required for patient care in Canada



- Those who, in the opinion of the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, do not pose a risk of significant harm to public health

### ***Air Travel Ban on Foreign Nationals (March 18)***

- The spread of COVID-19 has affected people in countries around the world. To protect Canadians and to ease the potential burden overseas travellers could place on our health care system and its frontline workers, a travel ban for most foreign nationals entering Canada by air was implemented.

### ***Non-essential Travel Restriction (Canada-US)***

- On March 18, 2020, the Governments of Canada and the United States announced that both countries would be implementing collaborative and reciprocal measures to suspend non-essential travel along the Canada-U.S. border in response to the spread of COVID-19.
- As of March 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT, there is now a temporary 30-day restriction on all non-essential travel at the Canada-U.S. border, effective for an initial period of 30 days, renewable.
- All travel of an optional or discretionary nature, including tourism and recreation, is covered by these measures. Travel by healthy people who have to cross the border to go to work or for other essential purposes, such as medical care, will continue.
- Some examples of essential travel purposes are:
  - Crossing the border for work and study;
  - Economic services and supply chains;
  - Critical infrastructure support;
  - Health (immediate medical care), safety and security;
  - Shopping for essential goods such as medication or goods necessary to preserve the health and safety of an individual or family; and
  - Other activities at the discretion of the BSO.
- Canadian citizens and permanent residents and Registered Indians under the *Indian Act* enter Canada by right. They will be provided with a Public Health Agency of Canada pamphlet that advises travellers that they must self-isolate for 14 days from the date they enter Canada.
- Canada will also implement measures at airports to:
  - strengthen health screening
  - increase presence to conduct further health screening and public outreach
  - increase signage throughout the arrivals area to encourage travellers to follow the latest public health guidance
  - prevent all travellers who have COVID-19 symptoms, regardless of their citizenship, from boarding international flights to Canada
    - airlines will conduct a basic health assessment of all air travellers based on guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada



- This includes making information readily available and raising awareness among **all** travellers about what they should do if they develop symptoms of COVID-19. In addition, we continue to advise travellers coming from any location to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- We continue to monitor and assess the global risk of COVID-19. To keep pace with the evolving situation, our response measures are being adjusted and refined in accordance with the global risk assessment. This includes updating our travel health advisories with increased risk levels.
- For Canadians who have travelled abroad, we continue to advise that you monitor your health after you return. If you become sick, it is good practice to call ahead to inform your health care professional and tell them about your travel history.

### ***Screening of Canadian Travellers Returning to Canada***

- As part of Canada's enhanced border measures to contain further introduction and spread of COVID-19, airlines will conduct a health check of all travellers before boarding a flight to Canada.
- The health check is based on guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada, in line with the World Health Organization's recommendations.
- Individuals will be screened for the following symptoms by airline personnel:
  - Fever
  - Cough
  - Difficulty breathing
- If air operators observe a traveller with symptoms or if the passenger answers yes to any of the questions on the health check, they will be refused boarding for a period of 14 days or until they provide a medical certificate confirming that their symptoms are not related to the COVID-19 virus.
- Further instructions and advice will be provided to travellers who are denied boarding advising them to follow the guidance of local public health authorities. These travellers will also be directed to the appropriate consular services.
- These measures will help protect the health of all Canadians.

### **On the health check**

- Airline staff will be advised to maintain distance between themselves and travellers at all times, and to encourage travellers to do so as well.
- Airline staff will observe if travellers are showing symptoms of COVID-19 and will ask every traveller if they have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
- They will also ask if travellers have been denied boarding in the past 14 days due to a medical reason related to COVID-19.



- However, there is allowance for travellers to provide a medical certificate certifying that any symptoms they have are not related to COVID-19.
- These measures are focused on travellers, not flight crew members.

### **On enforcement**

- Any traveller who provides false or misleading answers about their health during screening could be subject to penalty of up to \$5,000 under the *Aeronautics Act*.

### ***Upon arriving in Canada***

- All travellers assessed in the air to be symptomatic on arrival at a Canadian airport are met and escorted by border officers away from other travellers to be attended to by public health personnel.
- All persons arriving in Canada at an air, land, marine or rail border will be asked about the purpose of their visit and whether they are feeling ill or unwell. The border services officer may ask additional questions to make their determination.
- CBSA officers will observe for signs of illness and refer any traveller suspected of being ill for a further medical assessment by the Public Health Agency of Canada, regardless of how travellers respond to screening questions.
- All travellers — no matter their country of origin or mode of entry — are assessed on arrival to Canada. Entry screening is an important public health tool amongst others during periods of uncertainty and part of a multilayered government response strategy.
- CBSA officers remain vigilant and are highly trained to identify travellers seeking entry into Canada who may pose a health and safety risk.
- CBSA officers are providing symptomatic travellers with surgical masks and instructions on how to use them.
- These measures complement routine traveller screening procedures already in place to prepare for, detect and respond to the spread of serious infectious diseases into and within Canada.
- The following questions are now being asked by all border services officers at the primary inspection line at all air, land, ferry and rail ports of entry:
  - “Do you currently have a cough, difficulty breathing, or feel you have a fever?”
  - “I/we acknowledge that I/we must self-isolate for 14 days to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19.”
- CBSA Officers not only query travellers on the state of their health, they are trained to observe visible signs of illness and will refer any traveller who they suspect of being ill, regardless of how the traveller responded to the health screening question.



- Travellers presenting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be referred to a PHAC staff member for further assessment.
- These travellers are provided with a kit that includes a mask and instructions.
- All travellers entering Canada are given a Public Health Agency of Canada handout with instructions to self-isolate for 14 days. Symptomatic people are given a red pamphlet, and asymptomatic people are given a green pamphlet.

### ***Travel restrictions to the North***

- COVID-19 is a serious health threat, and the situation is evolving daily.
- As of March 24, cases have been detected in Northwest Territories and Yukon.
- Efforts are underway in Canada's North to ensure governments are prepared.
- Provincial and territorial governments have declared either a state of emergency or a public health emergency.
- These measures can be used to restrict travel within the country, to prevent what would be a significant impact on the health care system for that province or territory.
- At the federal level, we are advising Canadians to stay home if possible. This also means avoiding non-essential travel within the country.
- If you must leave your home, practise physical distancing, consistent hand-washing and, if you are not feeling well, stay home.

### ***Marine Sector Health in Canadian Waters***

- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is actively monitoring the situation in Halifax, Nova Scotia, regarding sick crewmembers aboard the *Siem Cicero*, a cargo ship travelling from Germany that is transporting non-essential cargo (cars).
- On March 17, PHAC was notified by the Central Notification System (CNS) of several crewmembers with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- To protect the health and safety of Canadians, PHAC made the decision to deny the ship's entry to port, as per section 39 of the *Quarantine Act*.
- Canada's ports play a key role in the economy and international trade. The marine transportation sectors on the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic coasts are prepared for the heightened risk posed by COVID-19.
- PHAC is working closely with partners, especially Transport Canada and local authorities, to limit the spread of the virus.



- We continue to monitor this situation and will advise crewmembers at a later date whether the ship will be allowed entry to port. Considerations for this decision would include all crewmembers completing 14 days of self-isolation from the date the last person started to have symptoms.

**If pressed on the steps PHAC would take to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 infection on a ship in Canadian waters**

- A Quarantine Officer would recommend that a ship that is still in international waters isolate all ill individuals, and their close contacts, in their cabins.
- Depending on the situation, the vessel might be ordered not to disembark passengers or crewmembers until all public health activities are completed in accordance with the *Quarantine Act*.
- To minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19 within Canada, officials would review the situation to determine the most appropriate next steps for passengers and crewmembers who are not showing symptoms of illness.

**Advice for travellers**

- The Government advises to postpone or cancel all non-essential travel outside of Canada. This means reconsidering vacations, sporting and entertainment events, large international conferences and other elective travel.
- This is especially important for older adults and people with underlying medical conditions who are at a higher risk of developing severe disease. In addition, it is particularly important for health care workers and others who come into close contact with these individuals to avoid travel.
- By making the choice to stay at home and not travel, you are protecting yourself, your family and doing your part to help us to slow the spread of coronavirus and protect the most vulnerable in our communities.
- It is also important to remember that if you travel abroad, you could be subject to the measures of other countries. Your one week trip may become much longer. You may also have reduced access to quality healthcare.

***Travel Health Notices***

- The Public Health Agency of Canada issues travel health notices to inform Canadian travellers of an increased or unexpected potential health risk in a country or region outside of Canada.
- The travel health notices also provide information on preventative measures travellers can take to help reduce these risks.
- The following is considered when adding countries or areas to the COVID-19 affected areas list:



- Multiple instances of spread have occurred at the community level (multiple clusters—not in definable settings such as a household);
  - Evidence of geographical spread; and
  - Whether cases can be linked to an exposure (i.e., to another case or because of travel to another country with ongoing transmission of COVID-19).
- The COVID-19 Affected Areas List on [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus) includes all countries with Travel Health Notices related to COVID-19.

## **Cottage Season and COVID-19**

- Public health guidance has been changing but that's because the situation is changing rapidly and we are learning more about COVID-19 everyday.
- Based on the current evidence, we are asking Canadians to avoid all non-essential travel to limit the spread of COVID-19, especially to smaller and rural communities where the healthcare systems could be easily overwhelmed.
- That's why we are asking everyone to not to go to cottages, campgrounds or vacation properties during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Unless the property is your primary residence or within the same community as your primary residence, you should delay your stays in these areas until the situation in Canada changes.
- If you get sick, you may not be able to get the help you need. If you stop along the way to get gas or groceries, you increase your risk of exposure and, if you're asymptomatic, you may pass the virus on to others.
- An influx of people into a small community can also strain the supply of food and other essentials for local residents.
- If you need to check in on your cottage for insurance purposes, you should only make a daytrip and then return directly home.
- All Canadians must continue to do everything possible to flatten the curve and keep our friends and families healthy. This includes staying home.

## **Cruise ship travel**

- The Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending that Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel because of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.
- Cruise passengers include travellers from around the world who may be arriving from areas with known or unknown spread of the novel coronavirus.



- The virus can spread quickly on board cruise ships because of the close contact amongst passengers.
- Older people and people with a weakened immune system or underlying medical condition are at a higher risk of developing severe disease and should avoid all cruise ship travel.
- As the situation evolves, many countries are implementing policies and restrictions in order to contain the COVID-19 outbreak, which could ultimately result in travellers being subject to quarantine procedures.
- The most important precautions recommended for travellers to prevent respiratory and other illnesses while travelling include:
  - wash your hands often with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds;
  - use alcohol-based hand sanitizer only if soap and water are not available; it is a good idea to always keep some with you when you travel;
  - eat and drink safely abroad by staying away from raw or undercooked food and meat;
  - avoid high-risk areas such as farms, live animal markets and areas where animals may be slaughtered; and
  - avoid close contact with people who may be sick, especially if they have difficulty breathing or have a fever or cough.
- In addition, effective March 1, 2020, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the world's largest cruise industry trade association, and its members have adopted enhanced protocols for ocean-going guests and crew who have recently travelled from or through Iran, South Korea and China, including Hong Kong and Macau.
- CLIA members are to deny boarding to all persons who:
  - have travelled from, visited or transited via airports in Iran, South Korea and China, including Hong Kong and Macau, within 14 days before embarkation;
  - have had close contact with, or helped care for, anyone suspected or diagnosed as having COVID-19, within 14 days before embarkation; or
  - are currently subject to health monitoring for possible exposure to COVID-19.

### **Cruise Ships MS Zaandam and MS Rotterdam**

- We are aware that 97 Canadian passengers and one Canadian crew member are aboard the MS *Zaandam* cruise ship and that another 150 Canadian passengers were moved to the MS *Rotterdam* cruise ship.
- At this time, no COVID-19 cases have been confirmed among Canadian citizens on either cruise ship.
- The cruise ships are porting at the Port of Everglades in Florida, and passengers deemed fit to travel will disembark in the coming days and take a flight home.
- A chartered plane will bring passengers from the United States to Toronto, Ontario.
- Passengers will be assessed before boarding the plane and upon entry into Canada.



- In Canada, passengers from the *MS Zaandam* and *MS Rotterdam* cruise ships will be subject to the Emergency Order under the *Quarantine Act* that is in place and requires mandatory quarantine (self-isolation) for 14 days.
- Travellers who continue to be asymptomatic upon arrival in Toronto will be permitted to take public transportation (e.g., flight, train, car, bus) to their final destination for their mandatory 14-day period of quarantine. Mask kits will be provided to all asymptomatic travellers as an extra precaution, should they develop symptoms during their onward travel home.
- The public health measures in place for the *MS Zaandam* and *MS Rotterdam* are consistent with measures currently in place for Canadian citizens returning from travel outside Canada.
- Passengers who are symptomatic will not be permitted to fly back to Canada; they will remain on the cruise ship until assessed to be recovered or transferred to the health care system in Florida.

### Travellers with no symptoms

- Passengers who are asymptomatic on the cruise ship will be permitted to disembark the ship, and travel by charter bus to the airport where they will be screened before boarding the charter flight to Canada (Toronto Pearson Airport).
- Upon entry into Canada, all travellers will be assessed by a Quarantine Officer and issued an order to quarantine for 14 days.
- Travellers who continue to be asymptomatic upon arrival in Toronto will be permitted to take public transportation (e.g., flight, train, car, bus) to their final destination for their mandatory 14-day period of quarantine. Mask kits will be provided to all asymptomatic travellers as an extra precaution, should they develop symptoms during their onward travel home.
- Symptomatic travellers will not be permitted to quarantine in a place where they would be in contact with people who are particularly vulnerable, such as adults 65 years or older and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions.
- Some asymptomatic travellers may be placed in a designated quarantine facility if, for example, their home situation is not suitable for quarantine and no suitable alternative can be found (e.g., seniors home or retirement home settings). Each situation will be assessed individually.
- Travellers are still at risk of developing symptoms and infecting others. The Public Health Agency of Canada will be conducting daily health assessments by phone.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada will work with federal and provincial partners to verify compliance with the Emergency Order. Travellers are required to self-monitor for symptoms, record their temperature and report this information during the health assessments.



### **Travellers with symptoms**

- Passengers who are symptomatic on the cruise ship will not be permitted to fly back to Canada; they will remain on the cruise ship until assessed to have recovered or will be transferred to the health care system in Florida.
- Travellers who develop symptoms during the flight will be disembarked from the plane directly to a hospital or a designated quarantine facility.

**NOTE: Additional media lines exist for mandatory quarantine for 14 days, including public health advice for returning travellers.**

### ***If pressed on enforcement [previously approved]***

- Spot checks will be conducted by the Government of Canada to verify compliance.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada will work with federal and provincial partners to verify compliance with the Emergency Order.
- Failure to comply with this Order is an offence under the *Quarantine Act*. The maximum penalties include a fine of up to \$750,000 and/or imprisonment for six months.
- Further, a person who causes a risk of imminent death or serious bodily harm to another person while willfully or recklessly contravening this Act or the regulations could be liable for a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or to imprisonment of up to three years, or to both.

### ***If pressed about Trenton***

- The focus of Canada's response was different in early February when the first cruise ships with COVID-19 outbreaks were identified.
- When previous Canadian cruise ship passengers were repatriated and subsequently quarantined at the Canadian Forces Base (CFB) in Trenton, Ontario, and at the NAV Centre in Cornwall, Ontario, there was no Emergency Order in effect that required all travellers to quarantine themselves for 14 days upon arrival in Canada.