

**COVID-19 VOLUNTARY SELF-ISOLATION CENTRE****SYNOPSIS**

On September 11, 2020, the Minister of Health announced \$13.9 million in funding over 12 months for Toronto Public Health to support the operation of a voluntary self-isolation/quarantine facility in the City of Toronto. This facility will assist individuals with COVID-19 who live in housing that may be crowded or have insufficient space for proper distancing from household contacts to self-isolate and help reduce the risks of spread of the virus to household contacts.

**SOMMAIRE**

Le 11 septembre 2020, la ministre de la Santé a annoncé l'affectation de 13,9 millions de dollars sur 12 mois pour financer l'établissement d'un centre d'auto-isolement et de mise en quarantaine volontaire à Toronto, sous la gouverne de Santé publique Toronto. Le centre offrira une solution aux personnes atteintes de la COVID-19 qui vivent dans un logement surpeuplé ou qui ne disposent pas d'un espace suffisant pour s'isoler convenablement des autres membres du foyer, et aidera à réduire le risque de transmission du virus à ces derniers.

**POTENTIAL QUESTION**

How will funding hotel facilities help with our fight against COVID-19?

**KEY MESSAGES**

- The Government of Canada is taking action to support individuals who lack the space and means to isolate effectively.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is providing funding to Toronto Public Health to operate a voluntary self-isolation centre.
- The availability of this facility is expected to help lower the rate of COVID-19 community spread by reducing transmission among those living in crowded housing.

**MESSAGES CLÉS**

- Le gouvernement du Canada prend des mesures pour soutenir les personnes qui manquent d'espace et de moyens pour entreprendre un isolement efficace.

- L'Agence de la santé publique du Canada finance le service de santé publique de Toronto pour exploiter un centre d'auto-isolément volontaire.
- La disponibilité de cette installation devrait aider à réduire le taux de propagation communautaire du COVID-19 par une transmission réduite parmi les personnes vivant dans des logements surpeuplés.

***IF PRESSED on federal funding for other communities...***

- This is the first federal announcement of a site like this in Canada.
- We are working closely with jurisdictions across Canada to learn from their experiences with voluntary isolation sites.
- We are open to discussing similar needs in other communities and jurisdictions.

***IF PRESSED on why the City of Toronto was chosen for this initiative...***

- The City of Toronto sent a request to the Public Health Agency of Canada for funding their proposed voluntary isolation site.
- This proposal was reviewed and approved for funding.
- The City of Toronto is one of Canada's most densely populated large urban centres, which makes it difficult for some to self-isolate. This contributes to a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.
- We are pleased to support Toronto Public Health, who recognized that this issue was contributing to community transmission, and took action to address it.

## **BACKGROUND**

When presenting with symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolation is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. However, for some Canadians, crowded housing conditions and restrictive costs can make it unsafe or impossible to effectively self-isolate at home.

Within the context of the broader COVID-19 pandemic response, evidence has emerged that people facing socio and economic challenges are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. Preliminary socio-economic data from Toronto Public Health and Public Health Ontario have revealed that lower-income neighbourhoods have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, including its most severe outcomes. Individuals from these neighbourhoods may have more difficulty properly isolating themselves due to factors such as overcrowding and/or resource constraints. The voluntary self-isolation site established by Toronto Public Health aims to assist in addressing this issue.

### **Role of Toronto Public Health**

Toronto Public Health will provide a centralized location with 140 rooms where eligible individuals can safely self-isolate for the required period. Transportation, lodging, meals, incidentals such as bedding and other necessities for residents, as well as security and cleaning personnel for the facility will be provided. A Toronto Public Health Communicable Disease Investigator will perform daily check-ins by phone with individuals residing at the facility.

### **Eligibility to access the self-isolation site**

Through its case and contact management process, Toronto Public Health will identify individuals to be offered transfer to the isolation site on a voluntary basis, based on eligibility criteria recommended by the Ontario Medical Officer of Health. For example, if a person is COVID-19 positive and lives in a home where there is no separate room in which they can isolate, they may be considered as a candidate for the voluntary self-isolation site. Individuals who are contacts of a positive case will also be considered if, for example, the positive case is unable to isolate safely. The total number of individuals housed will depend on the need that arises throughout the next 12 months.

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