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**Date:** May 24, 2020

**Subject:** Testing Activity Update

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Effective testing, combined with contact tracing and other public health measures, is critical to defeating COVID-19. As you may have heard through various media reports, the Premier will be announcing in the coming week a plan to expand testing in Ontario. It will continue to focus on anyone who has symptoms (even if mild) and will include asymptomatic risk-based testing, with the intention of more proactively detecting outbreaks and monitoring for any spread of COVID-19.

In preparation for the announcement of the plan, steps were taken over the weekend by Ontario Health and our partners to alert assessment centers because they will be the main way for Ontarians to get tested. We encourage them to enable the public to contact them by providing a telephone number in addition to their address, and we are working with them so Ontarians can contact them directly without having to take additional steps through Telehealth Ontario, primary care or public health units.

In addition to alerting the assessment centres, Ontario Health has been ramping up to increase targeted testing across multiple sectors. In partnership with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, we are taking an approach which is designed not only to protect and support those tested, but also for the system to learn what testing approaches are most effective and should become an ongoing part of our response. Expanded testing is also generating results for future research and analysis purposes. This work is in addition to the initial testing recently completed across all long-term care home residents and staff.

Over the weekend, testing activities have included:

- Beginning to roll out ongoing interval testing to all long-term care home workers
- Testing for hospital workers who are in COVID-related and non-COVID related settings, with approximately a dozen hospitals already initiated
- Testing of retirement home workers continuing
- Testing in other congregate settings continuing
- Working with hospitals to expand community-based testing in high COVID active areas
- And working with partners in non-health care settings to expand testing

If your agency would like to get involved as we schedule the ramp up of these testing activities, please contact Ontario Health at [Jordan.Ramsden@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:Jordan.Ramsden@ontariohealth.ca).

There are many partners involved in testing in Ontario – from the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, to assessment centres, public health units, laboratories, hospitals, long-term care homes, paramedics, other health care settings, non-health care settings and more. It requires an integrated effort that each day gets stronger.

As you may also be aware, Ontario Health began working with our partners at Public Health Ontario in March to develop an integrated provincial laboratory network for COVID-19 testing. More than 20 laboratories soon came on board that include Public Health Ontario, hospital and private laboratories. We are grateful for their united efforts. They meet every day, seven days a week, to look at ways to improve, stabilize and expand testing with recent successes including improvements in turn-around times and the quality of information for reporting. However, with this integrated network still developing, there are many improvement activities underway or slated to begin. If you have any questions about the lab network system, please contact [covid-19.diagnostics@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:covid-19.diagnostics@ontariohealth.ca).

Significant efforts are underway to identify cases by expanding testing, as well as contain and limit the spread of COVID-19 through contact tracing, case management and other public health measures. Thank you to everyone for your involvement and immense dedication to this effort.