

North American COVID-19 Policy Response Monitor: Ontario

December 21, 2020

What is the North American COVID-19 Policy Response Monitor?

The North American COVID-19 policy monitor has been designed to collect and organize up-to-date information on how jurisdictions are responding to the crisis. It summarizes responses of health systems as well as wider public health initiatives. The North American policy monitor is an offshoot of the international COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor (HSRM), a joint undertaking of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Canadian content to HSRM is contributed by the North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (NAO).

Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	1
1. Preventing transmission	2
2. Ensuring sufficient physical infrastructure and workforce capacity.....	18
3. Providing health services effectively.....	26
4. Paying for services	37
5. Governance	43
6. Measures in other sectors	59
References	81
Appendix A. Key Resources.....	114
Appendix B. Framework for Ontario's Re-closing Strategy	115

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

aCMOH	Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health	MIX	Medical Innovation Xchange
ALC	Alternate Level Care	MLTC	Ministry of Long-Term Care
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces	MOH	Medical Officer of Health
CCAB	Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business	MOH	Ministry of Health
CECRA	Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance	NML	National Microbiology Lab
CEO	Chief Executive Order	NOHFC	Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
CME	Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters	NORP	Northern Ontario Recovery Program
CMHA	Canadian Mental Health Association	OAG	Office of the Auditor General
CMOH	Chief Medical Officer of Health	OHA	Ontario Hospital Association
CSA	Canadian Standards Associations	OHIP	Ontario Health Insurance Plan
DOPHS	Diseases of Public Health Significance	OLIS	Ontario Laboratory Information System
ED	Emergency Department	OPP	Ontario Provincial Police
EFTO	Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	OSAP	Ontario Student Assistance Program
EHT	Employer Health Tax	OTF	Ontario Trillium Foundation
ELCC	Early Learning and Child Care Agreement	PANTHR	Pandemic Threat Response
EMCPA	<i>Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act</i>	PHAC	Public Health Agency of Canada
EMO	Emergency Management Office	PHO	Public Health Ontario
GAINS	Guaranteed Annual Income System	PHOL	Public Health Ontario Laboratory
GSN	Grants for Student Needs	PHU	Public Health Unit
iCBT	Internet-Based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	POST	People Outside Safely Together
ICON	Improving Connectivity for Ontario	PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
ICU	Intensive Care Unit	PPF	Priorities and Partnerships Fund
IMS	Incident Management System	PSW	Personal Support Worker
IPAC	Infection Prevention and Control	RED	Rural Economic Development Program
iPHIS	Integrated Public Health Information System	ROA	<i>Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act</i>
LEAP	Low-income Energy Assistance Program	RPP	Regulated Price Plan
LTC	Long-Term Care	RSA	Resident Support Aides
LHIN	Local Health Integration Network	SARI	Severe Acute Respiratory Infections
		SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
		SSF	Supports for Students Fund
		TTC	Toronto Transit Commission
		UIIP	Universal Influenza Immunization Program
		WSIB	Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

1. Preventing transmission

This section includes information on key public health measures that aim to prevent the further spread of the disease. It details how jurisdictions are advising the general public and people who (might) have the disease to prevent further spread, as well as measures in place to test and identify cases, trace contacts, and monitor the scale of the outbreak.

1.1 Health communication

The first official provincial communication regarding COVID-19 came on January 22, 2020, when Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott announced the addition of the novel coronavirus as a reportable disease under Ontario's public health legislation (Ontario, 2020f). In a statement to the public, Elliott announced that while the risk posed by the coronavirus remained low, the province was actively monitoring the situation (Ontario, 2020f). On January 25, Ontario announced its first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus (Ontario, 2020b). In response, the provincial government launched a dedicated webpage on COVID-19 on March 9 (Ontario, 2020g); the website is currently updated twice daily to report on the number of new COVID-19 cases (Ontario, 2020i). In addition, the website includes up-to-date information on symptoms, transmission, physical distancing, self-isolation, caring for someone with COVID-19, and information for health care providers (Ontario, 2020af). It also provides fact sheets on the coronavirus written in plain language and available in 30 languages (Ontario, 2020af). Throughout the pandemic, additional dedicated webpages have been added, such as those outlining the supports available for individuals and businesses in Ontario. In addition to this website (covid-19.ontario.ca), information is provided on social media through the accounts of the Ontario Ministry of Health (MOH), Minister of Health, Public Health Ontario (PHO), Ontario Health, local officials (e.g. Medical Officers of Health, public health units, municipalities, etc.), etc.

Since February 20, 2020, Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliot (Deputy Premier and Minister of Health), Dr. David Williams (Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, CMOH), and Dr. Barbara Yaffe (Ontario's Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, aCMOH) have provided regular, near-daily scheduled press briefings to deliver updates on COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020cb). Since June 1, the CMOH and/or aCMOH have held bi-weekly meetings, every Monday and Thursday (Ontario, 2020cc).

Since late September 2020, the Thursday meeting has also regularly been attended by Dr. Huyer, the current Coordinator of the Provincial Outbreak Response team, and Dr. Adalsteinn Brown, Dean of the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health and Co-Chair of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table, a non-governmental group of medical and scientific experts whose mandate is to provide weekly summaries of relevant research and model projections to the Province's Health Command Table and the public (Ontario, 2020id; Science Table, 2020a); since November 26, Dr. Brown has been a scheduled to regularly join the Thursday briefing has attended all technical media briefings to deliver the province's modeling projections, on behalf of the COVID-19 Science Advisory Table and Modeling Consensus Table. Other press briefings are attended by other content experts, as relevant to the day's topic; for example, briefings on COVID-19 testing are often attended by Dr. Vanessa Allen, Chief of Medical Microbiology at the provincial laboratories, and Matthew Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ontario Health.

1.2 Physical distancing

Physical distancing is recommended for all Ontarians (MOH, 2020m). On March 16, 2020, the CMOH announced that individuals should be practicing physical distancing by avoiding close contact, defined as “being within 2 metres of another person”, with people outside of their household (MOH, 2020c).

On March 30, the government announced that anyone who was not ill, had not recently travelled, or was in close contact with someone with COVID-19 was strongly recommended to stay home, except for accessing health care or medications, shopping for groceries once per week, walking their dogs, and getting exercise, while maintaining physical distancing (Ontario, 2020x).

Schools, child care facilities and youth camps

On March 12, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced that all publicly funded schools were to be closed following the one-week March Break (i.e., effective March 23) until April 5 (Ministry of Heritage, 2020). The following day, a joint statement was issued by the Ministers of Health and Colleges and Universities stating that the Ministry of Colleges and Universities was working with Ontario’s post-secondary institutions to ensure each campus had a COVID-19 response plan in place to ensure students and staff were not put at risk; several universities and colleges had previously announced earlier that day, or in the days prior, that all on-campus activities were to be cancelled effective March 16 through April 3, or until further notice (Ministry of Heritage, 2020). On March 31, the above school closures were extended until May 4 (Ontario, 2020aa). On April 14, the Government of Ontario announced that schools would not reopen on May 4 and did not set a date for their re-opening (CBC News, 2020b).

On April 26, the Ministry of Education announced all publicly funded schools will remain closed until at least May 31 (Ministry of Education, 2020d). However, to ensure the continuity of learning of students, the province announced they would be implementing new strategies including the replacement of remaining professional activity and examination days with instructional time, the implementation of an expanded summer learning program, the distribution of iPads and more (Ministry of Education, 2020d).

Notably, leading up to the Easter long weekend – the first public holiday since the pandemic was declared – provincial and public health authorities urged Ontarians to keep gatherings small and restricted to only the members of their household (Ontario, 2020ak). On April 7, the Premier declared the Easter Bunny as an essential service under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*; Mayor Tory of Toronto had previously declared the Easter Bunny and Tooth Fairy as essential workers – as had other world leaders (Ferreira, 2020). Similarly, on December 17, the Premier announced that the Lieutenant Governor issued a proclamation designating Santa Claus as an essential worker; the Elves’ Toy Workshop an essential manufacturing facility; and Santa’s Reindeer as essential transportation service providers (Ontario, 2020kz).

Further, throughout late October, provincial leaders made several statements regarding how Ontarians could safely celebrate Halloween during the pandemic. The Minister of Colleges and Universities issued a special statement to post-secondary students, reminding them of the importance of not attending any Halloween parties this year (Ontario, 2020ie). Ontarians were reminded to keep all in-person celebrations limited to members of their household, stay home if feeling ill and maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene. They also suggested Ontarians find creative and safe ways of celebrating Halloween and recommended contact-free ways of distributing candies to treat-or-treaters, e.g. using tongs instead of

their hands to hand out treats (ibid). Officials reminded Ontarians to check with their local Public Health Unit (PHU) for specific advice, guidelines and restrictions that may be in place; post-secondary students were cautioned that their post-secondary institutions may impose sanctions on any students caught violating public health measures (ibid).

On October 19, the CMOH issued guidance stating that door-to-door trick-or-treating was not recommended in areas that had entered modified Stage 2 (Ottawa, Peel, Toronto and York regions) (Ontario, 2020hs). This announcement was met with considerable apprehension from the public and medical experts, many of whom considered outdoor activities, such as trick-or-treating, relatively low risk for the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and regarded many of the province's measures, and lack of proactive responses, to-date as being anti-child (Troster, 2020). However, others agreed with the decision to forego in-person Halloween activities and created new Halloween activities, such as backyard treat hunts (ibid).

Public and private gatherings

Ontario announced its first measure to explicitly restrict mass gatherings on March 13, 2020 (Ministry of Heritage, 2020). The CMOH advised the immediate suspension of all gatherings of over 250 people (Ministry of Heritage, 2020). On March 16, Ontario announced a further restriction on gatherings to 50 people or less (MOH, 2020f). On March 17, the province's State of Emergency declaration came into effect (see Section 6.1), which prohibited gatherings of over 50 people until March 31 (Ontario, 2020k). Starting March 28, gatherings larger than five people were prohibited (Ontario, 2020u).

Since June 12, the province has promoted the idea of creating a social circle or bubble, containing no more than 10 people in total (Ontario, 2020co). To form a safe social circle, the province recommends starting with your current circle (i.e., the people in your household) and, if under 10 people, residents can choose to add members to their circle, for example, by including another household, family members or friends (Ontario, 2020u). The province recommends everybody in a circle do so in agreement not to see others outside of their circle (i.e., without maintaining physical distance) and to not be a member of more than one circle (ibid). However, the idea of social circles has been met with much confusion among Ontarians, reportedly due to the province's unclear messaging regarding what constitutes a circle, and many people have mistakenly, or otherwise, joined multiple circles (Kester, 2020).

These measures were relaxed during the summer months to permit a maximum gathering size of 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors (described further in Section 5.2). On August 21, this order was modified to permit 50 guests indoors per each meeting room or event space in a facility (Ontario, 2020ff). Notably, these capacity limits, for both indoor and outdoor gatherings, exclude employees and event personnel (ibid).

As mentioned elsewhere (see Section 6.2), ahead of each holiday period (e.g., Thanksgiving and Easter), provincial authorities have reminded residents of the importance of keeping any celebrations restricted to members of their household. On November 25, the province, in collaboration with its Public Health Measures Table and CMOH Dr. Williams, released its first preliminary guidance outlining ways Ontarians could safely celebrate during the winter holiday season (Ontario, 2020jh). Specific activities were highlighted, contrasting safer and riskier options. For example, virtual and outdoors activities were promoted, while indoors activities with individuals from outside one's household were discouraged. A

number of traditional provincial and local activities were also cancelled or moved online, e.g., New Years celebrations.

Non-health care businesses and services

On March 13, 2020, in accordance with the provincial restriction on mass gatherings of 250 people, all tourism attractions and convention centres closed (Ministry of Heritage, 2020). On March 16, Ontario announced the closure of various recreational programs, private schools, daycares, churches and faith settings, bars and restaurants (with the exception of take-out and delivery), and restricted guidance on gatherings to advise people avoid gatherings of over 50 people (MOH, 2020f). On March 17, the province's State of Emergency declaration (see Section 6.1) mandated the closure of the above-listed facilities.

Also on March 19, Ontario announced new regulations to reduce the need for in-person visits to ServiceOntario for provincial services, including driver's licence renewals, license plate validation, Ontario photo cards and commercial vehicle registration certificates, etc. set to expire during the pandemic (Ministry of Transportation, 2020a). Following this, on March 22, the provincial government announced that all DriveTest Centres (i.e., in-person driver's test centers) would close until further notice (Ministry of Transportation, 2020b).

On March 23, Premier Ford announced that non-essential business would be required to close for 14 days, unless these businesses can continue operations with employees working remotely (Ontario, 2020p).

On March 15, Ontario Parks cancelled all planned events and closed all park buildings, including visitor centres (Ministry of the Environment, 2020a). Following this, on March 18, the provincial government announced that all provincially administered parks will be closed to the public, including camping and day-use facilities (Ministry of the Environment, 2020b). Current visitors were required to vacate by March 19. On April 25, the government announced all Ontario Parks would remain closed until May 31 (Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, 2020).

On March 30, the government issued a new order closing all communal or shared outdoor amenities in the province (Ontario, 2020x).

Health care facilities

As described in Section 3.1, several non-essential health care services were reduced, postponed, or cancelled throughout the pandemic to ensure surge capacity for COVID-19 cases and promote physical distancing. As further described in Section 3.3, several services were also moved online, with the province enhancing its delivery of virtual care to further reduce in-person services and promote physical distancing.

As described below, in "Long-term care facilities" and elsewhere, several visitations have been in effect across congregate living care facilities in Ontario. Further, since March 19, the CMOH has recommended that visitors to acute care settings be screened and restricted to essential visitors only, including those visiting a patient who is very ill or receiving end-of-life care; parents/guardians of a child/youth; and visitors of patients undergoing surgery or women giving birth (CMOH, 2020). Typically, children under 12 years of age are not permitted to visit. Specific guidance varies by hospital/ health centre, although the province has provided recommendations and additional guidance has been provided throughout the pandemic, such as new allowances, in November 2020, to permit "essential care providers", particularly for individuals with complex needs, such as developmental disorders (OHA, 2020).

Long-term care facilities

As of May 30, 2020, 63.5% of COVID-19 related deaths in Ontario had occurred among individuals living in long-term care (LTC) facilities (Ontario, 2020by). To address the substantial burden posed by COVID-19 within LTC facilities, a number of measures have been implemented over the course of the pandemic.

The first measures were announced on March 11, requiring the screening of all staff, students, volunteers, and visitors in LTC facilities (MLTC, 2020a). On March 11, the CMOH issued a letter to all LTC, retirement, supportive care, hospice and other congregate care homes to recommend these settings only allow essential visitors until further notice, such as those visiting residents who are very ill or require end-of-life care (MLTC, 2020b). Under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act*, residents were restricted from leaving these facilities for short visits with family and friends starting March 23 (MLTC, 2020c).

On April 16, the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care issued a joint order, along with Ontario Health, outlining the temporary pause of discharging patients to LTC and retirement facilities; on April 29, specific criteria outlining the conditions under which transfer of hospital patients and community clients to LTC and retirement homes could occur were announced (Angus et al., 2020). Under these new criteria, the receiving home must not be amid a COVID-19 outbreak, new residents must be tested negative for COVID-19, the transfer must occur within 24 hours of the laboratory results, and the receiving home must be able to self-isolate the new resident for 14 days (Angus et al., 2020).

On June 11, as the province began to re-open, the government announced that it would be gradually resuming family visits to LTC homes, retirement homes and other residential care settings (Ontario, 2020cn). Family and friends were allowed access beginning June 18, with enhanced health and safety standards and physical distancing (Ontario, 2020cn). LTC homes permitted one person to visit a resident per week, including a primary care giver, if required. Retirement homes also resumed indoor and outdoor visits, with physical distancing. Other residential care settings allowed a maximum of two visitors per resident in outdoor settings (ibid). Visitors must adhere to screening protocols and provide proof of negative COVID-19 results within the previous two weeks for each visit (Ontario, 2020cn). Face coverings or masks must be worn during visits. Visitation was not permitted in LTC and retirement homes experiencing outbreaks, those which have not provided clear protocols for visitors and residents, or those which have not maintained the adequate infection prevention and control standards (Ontario, 2020cn).

Since August 28, residents of LTC facilities have been permitted to leave their facilities for short-stays and temporary absences, of one or two nights (Ontario, 2020fm); the latter being approved on a case-by-case basis. Residents leaving on a temporary absence are required to quarantine for 14 days after their return to the LTC facility.

Other settings

On March 13, 2020, Minister Elliot announced that measures were being taken to protect the health and safety in correctional facilities (Ministry of Solicitor General, 2020a). With this announcement, all personal visits to adult correctional facilities across the province were suspended and intermittent inmates who serve time on weekends were required to report to their reporting facility to be given a temporary absence from custody and permitted to return home. This was followed by a similar federal order on March 14 (Correctional Services Canada, 2020). Following this, on March 20, the provincial government announced further measures to prevent the transmission and impact of COVID-19 on residents of

provincial correctional facilities, including allowing correctional services to have the option to issue temporary absences beyond the current 72-hour maximum, allowing early release of inmates nearing the end of their sentences, and allowing the Ontario Parole Board to conduct hearings by electronic or written means (Ministry of Solicitor General, 2020b).

Transition: Re-imposition of stricter measures

On September 19, 2020, the provincial government, in consultation with the CMOH and Public Health Measures Table, introduced new limits on the number of people permitted to attend unmonitored and private social gatherings across the province (Ontario, 2020gf). Specifically, gatherings were capped at 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors. Since September 18, these restrictions had been imposed in Toronto, Peel Region and Ottawa regions; this order expanded these measures to entire province.

Throughout the pandemic, particularly during the summer months, there were a number of reports of Ontarians foregoing these gathering restrictions, with several accounts of individuals throwing large parties, particularly in the Toronto and Peel regions (Tsekouras, 2020b). Despite substantial fines and explosive comments from provincial and local authorities, such as the Premier, there were continued reports of parties including hundreds of people (ibid).

To support compliance, amendments to the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act* were introduced on September 19, which established:

- A new offence for hosting or organizing gatherings in residential premises, such as backyard barbeques or parties, or other prescribed premises that exceeds these gathering limits;
- A minimum fine of CA\$10,000 for gathering organizers;
- Authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to include additional types of premises for this offense; and
- Provides authority for a police officer, and others with similar authority, to order the temporary closure of premises where there are reasonable grounds to believe gathering sizes exceed these limits, and requiring individuals to leave the premises (ibid).

Effective September 26, additional public health measures were introduced to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in business establishments (Ontario, 2020gm). Specifically, bars and other food and drinking establishments were prohibited from serving alcohol after 11 pm, and the consumption of alcohol on was prohibited on these premises between 12 am and 9 am; all strip clubs were ordered close; and businesses were ordered to comply with all advice, recommendations and instructions ordered by the CMOH regarding COVID-19 screening measures (ibid).

Under modified Stage 2, only essential visitors, including one caregiver, are permitted at LTC facilities in affected regions. Further, since October 19, short-term and temporary absences of LTC residents for social or personal reasons would not be allowed until further notice; only absences for medical or compassionate reasons are permitted (Ontario, 2020hq). Under the province's color-coded public health control system, general visitors are not permitted in any LTC facilities that are experiencing an outbreak or located within orange, red or Grey control zones (Ontario, 2020gw).

On October 5, the province updated to its LTC facility visitor policies to introduce stricter measures in communities with higher levels of transmission (Ontario, 2020hl). Since October 7, essential visitors,

including caregivers, have been the only visitors permitted in LTC facilities in hotspot communities. Each resident is permitted a maximum of two designated caregivers; however, only one can visit per time. Caregivers must attest to having a negative COVID-19 diagnostic test in the prior 14-day period, with no subsequent positive test (ibid). All visitors must follow public health guidelines, including screening and wearing a face mask; caregivers are required to wear additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when caring for residents who are confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, or are otherwise isolating or quarantining (Ontario, 2020hl).

Effective October 16, short-term and temporary absences for social or personal reasons have been prohibited for residents in LTC facilities in Ottawa, Peel and Toronto, given the greater levels of community transmission in these areas transmission (Ontario, 2020hl).

As described in Section 5.3, the province introduced a colour-coded framework guiding its re-closing strategy during the fall wave of COVID-19. Under this framework, Ontarians were asked to limit their number of close contacts with people outside of their home as much as possible, maintain physical distancing, wear a mask when inside public spaces or outdoors, if physical distance cannot be maintained, and avoid interregional travel, particularly to areas with lower community transmission (Ontario, 2020jd). Under the frameworks two most stringent levels (Red – Control and Grey – Lockdown), residents are asked to limit their trips outside of the home to only essential activities and work remotely, if possible (ibid).

As described in Section 5.3, on December 21, it was announced that the province would enter a multi-week province-wide shut down starting December 26.

1.3 Isolation and quarantine

On March 16, 2020, Ontario's CMOH, Dr. David Williams, strongly advised people over 70 years old and/or with immunocompromising conditions to isolate at home (MOH, 2020f). Williams also recommended self-isolation for 14 days among those who had recently travelled outside of Canada, with the exception of essential workers who were able to return to work if asymptomatic and self-monitoring (MOH, 2020f). On March 19, this recommendation was extended to advise self-isolation for any Ontarian returning from travel, including essential workers, whether asymptomatic or not (Ontario Health, 2020). On March 25, the federal government announced that all travellers entering Canada must quarantine for 14 days upon entry, with the exception of workers who are essential to the movement of goods and people (PHAC, 2020a).

Further, individuals may also be instructed by a health care provider and/or a public health official to self-isolate and/or self-monitor; for example, all individuals who have recently come into close contact with a confirmed, suspected, or probable case of COVID-19 are order to self-isolate for 14 days (Ottawa Public Health, 2020). All individuals with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, awaiting their COVID-19 laboratory test results, or with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, no matter how mild, are also ordered to self-isolate for 14 days, until their symptoms have cleared, or as otherwise advised by a public health official (Ottawa Public Health, 2020). This is enforced through the *Health Protection and Promotion Act of Ontario*, which states that a local medical officer of health may mandate a person to take action with respect to a communicable disease; for example, an individual confirmed to have COVID-19 may face a fine of up to CA\$5,000 per day for not self-isolating (Ottawa Public Health, 2020). To date, self-isolation is only mandatory for these specific groups.

Specific resources have also been made available to support the isolation and quarantining of persons experiencing homelessness. For example, on March 20, the City of Toronto (the provincial capital and its most populated centre) announced a homeless recovery centre providing 24/7 medical support for homeless individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Cressy, 2020a). Since then, Toronto has also acquired five hotels, two vacant rental buildings, and 50 permanent housing units as part of its integrated homelessness response and concern for COVID-19 outbreaks within the city's shelter system (News Staff, 2020b). These measures are being similarly implemented in Ottawa. On March 23, a local recreation centre became an isolation and treatment centre for homeless individuals with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection (Osman, 2020). Likewise, in Hamilton, a convention centre has been transformed into a makeshift shelter for men, with medical and isolation rooms available (Hristova, 2020).

Throughout the pandemic, critics have urged the provincial government to offer more resources for individuals requiring to isolate for COVID-19, such as isolation centers and paid sick leave (Allen, 2020). Several local leaders, such as the MOH of Toronto and Peel have urged the government to provide more resources. In response to his region's worsening COVID-19 situation, Peel's three mayors issued a joint letter directly requesting support from the federal government to create an isolation center; the request was almost immediately responded to, with a CA\$6.5M from the federal government announced on November 26, 2020, to support the creation and operation of a new voluntary isolation center for at least 16 months (Canada, 2020c). Toronto was the location of the first voluntary isolation hotel (it opened September 12, 2020 with a 12-month CA\$13.9M federal investment) but the site has gone mostly unused, with only 150 people reportedly having used the hotel as of December 15 (Allen, 2020; Toronto, 2020b).

1.4 Monitoring and surveillance

Screening and surveillance

For surveillance purposes, Ontario uses the national case definition for COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020w). The integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS) is the information system used for the reporting and surveillance of Diseases of Public Health Significance (DOPHS) in Ontario (PHAC, 2020c). Final results of COVID-19 testing are reported to the health care provider who submitted the sample (PHAC, 2020c); however, since April 3, 2020, residents have been able to access their test results using a secure, online iPHIS-based portal (Raymond, 2020) is the responsibility of the ordering physician or other health care provider to communicate test results to their patients and report all positive and negative results to the local PHU (PHAC, 2020c). The PHU will directly contact those who have tested positive as part of Ontario's case-and-contact management activities (PHAC, 2020c).

Contact tracing

Though contact tracing is performed by PHUs, it is unclear to what extent contacts are managed and how quickly tracing is performed. On April 3, 2020, Ontario issued a new emergency order to provide PHUs increased flexibility with staffing decisions and increase their capacity for contact tracing (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, 2020a). For example, this has allowed volunteers, including retired nurses and medical students, to become involved in case-and-contact management (MOH, 2020m).

On May 4, Government of Ontario announced that, through their efforts to hire more personnel and leverage the help of volunteers, they had significantly increased contact tracing capacity (Ontario, 2020be). However, several public health authorities and Premier Ford have suggested that these efforts

will need to be further increased in order to adequately trace all contacts in a timely manner (Ontario, 2020be).

On October 14, the province announced it had hired up to 600 more contact tracers and case managers, bringing the total number across the province to 2,750 (Ontario, 2020hk); in the spring, there were reportedly 1,500 contact tracers working across Ontario. Further, staff from the Ontario Public Service also volunteering for redeployment to support contact tracing during fall and winter; since July, an additional 600 Statistics Canada employees were also deployed to assist with contact follow-up (ibid).

On July 31, Ontario became the first province to pilot Canada's new mobile COVID-19 exposure notification application ("app"), *COVID Alert* (Ontario, 2020ek). The app is compatible with most smartphones, for which nearly 90% of Ontarians have access to (ibid). The app would let users know if they are exposed to the virus; users confirmed to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 would be given a unique code which, when entered into the app, would anonymously notify any contacts considered high-risk of exposure (e.g., prolonged physical contact in the two days prior to symptoms). Exposures are recorded using Bluetooth technology and notifications are limited to users of the application, who have provided the app access to their Bluetooth devices. *COVID Alert* was created by the Ontario Digital Service and volunteers from Shopify, a Canadian online commerce platform. Notably, the app was developed in consultation with both the Privacy Commissioners of Canada and Ontario to ensure user privacy (ibid); however, this also means that limited information is available to PHUs for the purposes of contact tracing.

Since the launching of *COVID Alert*, the Government of Ontario has worked with a number of influential brands to increase the application's uptake, including Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, the Toronto Raptors, the country's leading telecommunications companies and banks, municipalities (e.g. Toronto and Ottawa), and several business and other organizations (Ontario, 2020hm).

Uptake of the app has been less than ideal and has not reached the level required to ensure the app can effectively support contact tracing efforts. As of October 2, fewer than 10% of the Canadian population had downloaded the app and more than 95% of people testing positive for COVID-19 fail to use the app to notify their contacts (Pazzano & Hill, 2020); in Ontario, just 4% of individuals with a positive test since the app launched used it to alert their contacts (ibid). As of October 15, reportedly more than 1,130 one-time keys had been entered into the application by users confirmed to have SARS-CoV-2 infection and using the application to notify their contacts of exposure (Ontario, 2020hm). As of September 29, no one-time keys had been entered in the other provinces using the app (Pazzano & Hill, 2020).

As of November 22, the province reported having almost 4,000 case management and contact tracing staff working to meet its goal of reaching >90% of cases and contacts within 24 hours (Ontario, 2020jd). However, a special Ontario Auditor General report outlined that the average time between case notification and initiating contact tracing was over 4 days in most jurisdictions (Ontario Auditor General, 2020).

Data collection

Information about confirmed and suspected COVID-19 cases is collected by case managers through iPHIS, including age, sex, date of diagnosis, symptoms, exposure information (e.g. source of exposure), whether the person is a part of an outbreak investigation, health outcomes (e.g. whether admitted to hospital), medical history (e.g. certain medical diagnoses, such as diabetes), and other socio-demographic data (e.g.

whether the individual is a health care worker, experiencing homelessness, resident of a LTC facility, etc.) (PHO, 2020e). Only approved individuals have access to these data, i.e., for the purposes of contact and case management, or approved research uses. Data collection regarding tests performed in the province are collected through multiple sources, including the Ontario Laboratory Information System (OLIS), PHO Laboratories (PHOL) Labware and distributed hospital-based information systems, for tests performed in hospitals; for example, in the beginning of the pandemic, most COVID-19 tests conducted on children admitted to the province's pediatric hospitals were performed in-house (ICES, 2020).

Notably, OLIS has been used for over 30 years and still relies on laboratories to fax test results to their corresponding PHUs (Ontario Auditor General, 2020); critics have highlighted that this has led to lags in data collection and reporting, as well as opportunities for missing data. Similar deficiencies have also been noted for iPHIS (ibid).

For example, a mix-up in reporting responsibilities led to at least 700 positive tests not being reported by hospitals to 12 public health units over the spring and summer months (Crawley, 2020b); the samples were taken at the William Osler Health System, which has hospital sites in Toronto and Peel regions and a drive-through assessment centre, and processed by the laboratory at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto (ibid).

Currently, the province's dedicated COVID-19 dashboard is updated twice per day to provide an up-to-date count of the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, hospital and intensive care admissions, laboratory tests completed, and information regarding LTC outbreaks (Ontario, 2020by). While the province's dashboard provides the age and sex break-down of cases, PHO hosts an interactive dashboard with additional characteristics of cases, e.g. PHU of residence; PHO also publishes daily epidemiological summaries, which include more refined details (PHO, 2020c). However, the level of detail in the data being provided to the public has increased over time. For example, since May 27, Toronto Public Health has provided detailed neighbourhood-level tracking of COVID-19 cases and, on April 22, Toronto Board of Health Chair, Councillor Joe Cressy, disclosed that Toronto Public Health had begun the development of a new data system, independent from the provincial government, to track race-based metrics related to COVID-19 (Cressy, 2020). These decisions cite observations from several cities in the US, where racialized people are more likely to die of the virus compared to the general population; thus, many local researchers and medical officers of health have called on the provincial government to collect this data to identify the at-risk communities and inform decision-making (Cressy, 2020). During the summer (exact date unknown), the province later followed the lead of Toronto Public Health by also collecting race-based data, as well as information on household size and language (PHO, 2020b).

On April 15, the Government of Ontario announced it is developing a new health data platform called the Pandemic Threat Response (PANTHR), in consultation with the province's Privacy Commissioner (Ontario, 2020al). The aim of this new platform will be to securely disseminate a broad range of integrated, de-identified data, including physician and medical drug claims submitted through Ontario's publicly funded health insurance plan, publicly funded home care and LTC claims, discharge summaries of hospital stays and emergency department (ED) visits, laboratory testing information, information on the province's critical care capacity and other information based on emerging research needs, to better support modelling and research informing Ontario's health system planning and emergency response (Ontario, 2020al). It was expected that researchers could begin accessing the platform in July 2020 (ibid).

On June 4, the province appointed former federal Minister of Health and Minister of Indigenous Services, Dr. Jane Philpott, as a special advisor on data (Ontario, 2020cg). Dr. Philpott was tasked with supporting the design and implementation of the new Ontario Health Data Platform, formerly called PANTHR (ibid). Notably, in past years, PHO had a senior expert on data collection, presentation and sharing; however, the person in this role was laid off last year and the role has not yet been refilled (Warnica, 2020b).

On September 11, the province launched a webpage dedicated to publicly reporting cases of COVID-19 in schools and day cares (Ontario, 2020fx). On its dedicated COVID-19 website, the province also provides a [list of the specific LTC facilities affected by COVID-19](#), including a summary of the measures in place to protect residents of LTC facilities.

Model projections

The Government of Ontario first released their provincial COVID-19 modeling projections on April 3, 2020, including forecasts for the expected number of COVID-19 cases and deaths under different scenarios (Ontario, 2020ae). They estimated the province would see between 3,000 and 15,000 deaths under current public health measures, compared to 100,000 without these measures (Ontario, 2020ae). On April 20, updated model projections were presented, suggesting that community spread had likely peaked in Ontario but showed that outbreaks in LTC and congregate home settings continued to be a major challenge (Ontario, 2020at). Importantly, the province had avoided a large surge in cases that may have overwhelmed hospitals, as suggested by original model projections. Nevertheless, the province emphasized that physical distancing measures must remain in place to continue to curb the spread of disease (Ontario, 2020at).

Following a period of low community transmission during the summer months, model projections released on September 20 showed that the province was experiencing a second wave comparable to that experienced by other comparable jurisdictions, such as Victoria, Australia and Michigan, United States, and was on track to experience a second wave magnitudes larger than the first wave (Ontario, 2020ae).

Model projects released on October 9 suggested that Ontario's health care system could be soon overwhelmed by the rapid growth of COVID-19 cases, especially in hotspot areas such as Toronto, Ottawa and Peel (Ontario, 2020hf). Specifically, these projections suggested Ontario was on track to experience the worst-case scenarios previously seen in Northern Italy and New York City in the spring. Province-wide COVID-19 hospitalizations had increased 250% in the previous three weeks (ibid).

The most recent projections, shared on December 21, suggested that the pandemic may soon become unsustainable for Ontario's health care system (Science Table, 2020b). Specifically, while presenting the province's modeling projections, Dean Brown advised that implementing a hard lockdown as soon as possible would be the most advisable option, allowing the province to get a control on their rising case numbers (ibid).

1.5 Testing

At the start of the pandemic, individuals needed to be referred to a testing center by a health care provider either through the provincial telephone-based health line (Telehealth), a primary care provider, or their local health unit (PHAC, 2020c); an online self-assessment tool is also available through the province's dedicated COVID-19 website, which provides individuals with further instructions if testing is suggested

for them (Ontario, 2020bt). The combination of signs, symptoms and exposures used to determine testing eligibility has changed over time (see below). Respiratory tract specimens are used for testing, either via a nasopharyngeal swab or viral throat swab (PHAC, 2020c). See Section 3.2 for more details on the patient pathway for managing cases.

Assessment centres

As of March 16, 2020, there were 38 dedicated COVID-19 assessment centres across Ontario (News Staff, 2020a); by April 3, there were 100 centers, including 15 drive-through centers (Ontario, 2020ai). On May 4, the province confirmed that testing is being carried out in hospitals, LTC homes, group homes, shelters, emergency child care centres and other congregate settings (Ontario, 2020be).

As described below, additional assessment centers have opened over the course of the pandemic, including mobile centers for vulnerable and hard-hit communities.

Notably, on Sunday, October 4, the province's assessment centers discontinued walk-in services. Since Tuesday, October 6, testing at assessment centers has only been available on an appointment basis (Ontario, 2020gv); the days in between were used to perform a deep clean of the centers and allow the provincial laboratory network to catch-up on its backlog of tests. Mobile and pop-up testing centers would continue to service vulnerable populations; further, the province expanded the number of pharmacies permitted to perform COVID-19 testing (ibid).

Testing criteria

Testing eligibility for COVID-19 in Ontario is based on clinical assessment and has been revised over the course of the pandemic (MOH, 2020g). With shortages of testing supplies, a prioritized testing strategy has been in place throughout the pandemic (MOH, 2020g). Routine testing of asymptomatic people is currently not recommended, regardless of travel history (MOH, 2020g).

On March 12, 2020, the province announced that asymptomatic individuals who travelled outside of the country will no longer be tested because of limited supply of viral nasopharyngeal swabs; prior to this, all travellers were eligible to receive a test, as well as contacts of confirmed cases, health-care workers with symptoms or who are part of an investigation into an institutional outbreak, residents of LTC and retirement homes, and First Nation community members living on reserve (Dunham, 2020).

On April 10, the province announced it was expanding its testing criteria broadly test symptomatic priority groups, including: hospital inpatients; residents of LTC facilities; frontline health care workers and emergency responders; individuals living in remote, isolated or Indigenous communities; individuals living in congregate centres such as homeless shelters and prisons; and other vulnerable populations, such as individuals with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant persons, newborns and cross-border workers (Office of the Premier, 2020t).

As part of the *COVID-19 Action Plan for Protecting Long-Term Care Homes*, announced on April 15, the province expanded testing to include residents and staff of LTC homes, even if they are asymptomatic (Office of the Premier, 2020y). The *COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People*, announced on April 23, also announced plans to increase screening and testing of symptomatic staff and residents of group homes for individuals with disabilities, shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, and children's homes (Office of the Premier, 2020af).

Hospitals have also implemented their own testing strategies throughout the pandemic, such as routine testing of inpatients upon admission (SickKids, 2020). Guidance for specific populations is also provided by expert panels; for example, the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health has recommended, since April 31, all infants born to mothers confirmed to have COVID-19 at the time of delivery be tested within 24 hours of delivery and later within 48 hours, if a negative test is obtained (PCMCH, 2020).

On May 2, the provincial government released updated guidance to the health sector to ensure consistency in decision making on the testing of priority groups (Ontario, 2020be). On May 29, the province's testing criteria were further expanded to, include individuals with as few as one COVID-19 symptom, no matter how mild, and asymptomatic individuals concerned about exposure (Ontario, 2020bw). However, there have been reports throughout the pandemic that the specific instructions for assessing testing centers and the application of the provincial testing guidelines have varied across assessment centers and PHUs (Ontario, 2020bw).

In response to growing wait times for accessing COVID-19 diagnostic tests, on September 24, the province announced new COVID-19 testing guidelines (Ontario, 2020gl). Effective immediately, the following individuals would be eligible for testing at provincial COVID-19 assessment centers: those with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19; exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case; a resident or staff member of a setting experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak; and those eligible for testing as part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the MOH or Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC). Otherwise, asymptomatic persons and eligible person under the Ministries' testing initiatives could receive diagnostic testing at a participating pharmacy (ibid). It was reported that the Testing Strategy Expert Panel recommended that asymptomatic testing be stopped on July 5, as it provided limited added value given the province's limited testing capacity and growing backlog of uncompleted tests (Ontario Auditor General, 2020).

On October 1, the province announced updated testing guidance for children, which would assist parents in determining when their children and/or families should be tested for COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020gu). Notably, the provincial laboratories experienced growing backlogs (reaching 90,000 at one point in September) and residents faced growing wait times to receive a test (and results), with many reporting they were unable to schedule a test for days or had to wait an entire day in a line-up to receive a test (Herhalt, 2020). Much of the increase demand was reportedly due to substantial increase in tests being sought by school-aged children and their families following the re-opening of the school year and in response to the province's guidance for children with symptoms of COVID-19 to quarantine or receive a COVID-19 diagnostic test (ibid). Specifically, the new screening tool would ask students two sets of questions – the first pertaining to symptoms common to COVID-19 and the second to symptoms commonly associated with other illnesses, such as runny nose and headache (ibid). Under the new guidance, only students with symptom suggestive of COVID-19 (namely, fever, cough, shortness of breath, or decreased or loss of taste or smell) are asked to stay home, until consulting a medical provider or receiving a negative COVID-19 tests. Any children requiring medical assessment according to the tool are asked to alert their school or child care center; however, other members of their household are permitted to continue attending school or work (ibid). Children with only one symptom of other illnesses are asked to quarantine at home for a 24-hour period and alert their school or child care center; these children can return to school once they feel well enough to do so, without the need for a COVID-19 diagnostic test. Children with two or more symptoms associated with other, non-COVID-19 illnesses are asked to follow

the same steps as those with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19. Children, or their parents on their behalf, must complete the province's [online screening tool](#) everyday before attending in-person classes.

On November 23, the province launched a targeted 4-week voluntary testing program for asymptomatic students and staff in hotspot regions across the province (Ontario, 2020jl). Specifically, the Ministry of Education, MOH and Ontario Health would support implementation of the program across interested schools in Ottawa, Toronto, Peel and York regions. While participants will be asked to have a valid health card, this will not be requirement to receive a COVID-19 diagnostic test (Ontario, 2020jn). As of December 18, 4,500 asymptomatic tests had been completed, including 57 individuals identified to have COVID-19 (at least 26 were students) (DeClerq, 2020b). In response, the Toronto District School Board, which had to-date witnessed 12 schools close as a result of outbreaks, called upon the province to extend the winter break and expand asymptomatic testing to all of the board's schools (ibid).

On December 14, the province announced it had updated its testing guidance for outbound international travellers (Ontario, 2020kp). Effective December 11, individuals requesting a COVID-19 diagnostic test for the purposes of international travel clearance were no longer eligible for a publicly funded COVID-19 test in Ontario (ibid). The change was made to preserve capacity within the provincial testing network for those who are symptomatic or high-risk of being exposed to COVID-19 (ibid). During the announcement, provincial authorities reminded Ontarians to avoid non-essential travel and stay home as much as possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Laboratory and testing capacity

On March 12, 2020, the provincial government announced enhanced measures to boost access to testing by establishing a number of dedicated assessment centres in areas experiencing a growth of testing, with additional assessment centres being established across the province in the subsequent weeks (MOH, 2020b).

After facing much criticism of under-testing (and lower numbers of tests conducted in Ontario than in other provinces), on April 10, the Government of Ontario announced an expansion of its COVID-19 testing capacity (Ontario, 2020ai). Specifically, the province announced plans to double the number of tests processed each day to 14,000 by April 29 (Ontario, 2020ai). On May 4, the province announced that they were exceeding their new target of 16,000 tests a day and had significantly increased testing capacity by developing an integrated laboratory system, which consists of over 20 organizations throughout the province (Ontario, 2020be). On May 29, the province stated that they continue to lead the large Canadian provinces (i.e., Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia) in daily testing volumes and had completed 680,687 tests to date (Ontario, 2020bw). However, many critics, including the Premier, have highlighted that the province has not consistently reached their target testing capacities and a current testing backlog remains present (Ontario, 2020ai).

On October 2, the province announced it would be increasing its testing capacity to 50,000 tests per day by mid-October and to 68,000 by mid-November (Ontario, 2020gv).

On November 24, the province announced it had approved a rapid COVID-19 diagnostic test, called ID Now (Ontario, 2020jg). The province had received approximately 98,000 tests, which were being piloted in two hospitals, with 20 more hospitals to launch shortly thereafter. Deployment of rapid tests would be focused within remote and rural communities across the province; additional areas, such as Toronto and

Peel regions, would receive the tests beginning in December (ibid). Additional tests would also be shared with corporations, such as those in the airline and power sectors (ibid).

On November 24, the province also announced it had approved and received 1.2 million rapid antigen tests (Abbott's Panbio test), which would support screening at LTC facilities, retirement homes, hospitals, and other workplaces (Ontario, 2020jg). The test would also be used for an 8-week pilot program within participating employers in the private, public and non-profit sectors, particularly those in health care, frontline, and congregate settings (ibid).

Test results and reporting

Turnaround times in Ontario vary according to geographic location and proximity to a laboratory location (PHAC, 2020c). At PHO Laboratories (PHOL), COVID-19 testing is performed seven days a week and the turnaround time is stated to be four days, longer if the specimens are required to be sent to the National Microbiology Lab (NML) in Winnipeg, as was common at the start of the pandemic. However, PHOL has been a certified COVID-19 testing laboratory since early March 2020 (exact date not reported), meaning test results no longer require confirmation by the NML (PHAC, 2020c). Additional time is required for results to be posted to the online portal. Some hospitals and community laboratories have also implemented in-house COVID-19 testing and their results are deemed sufficient for case confirmation (i.e., they do not need to be sent to PHOL or NML for confirmation) (PHAC, 2020c). The turnaround time for in-house testing varies between sites. On May 4, 2020, the province stated that labs are providing test results generally within 24 to 48 hours (Ontario, 2020be).

As of November 22, the province has capacity to process 50,000 tests per day, and was building further capacity to reach 100,000 tests per day by mid-December (Ontario, 2020jd). According to *COVID-19 Response Framework – Keeping Ontario Safe and Open*, the province aims to complete at least 60% of tests within one day and 80% within two days, with a target of maintaining percent positivity under 3% (ibid).

Notably, a special Ontario Auditor General report outlined that, between March and August 2020, it took almost 3 days, on average, to notify individuals of their positive test, from the time of specimen collection, in most regions of the province; in urban and densely populated regions, such as Toronto, Peel, Ottawa and York Regions, this wait was longer (e.g. 5.75 days in Toronto) (Ontario Auditor General, 2020). In contrast, the MOH's target is for at least 60% of tests to be completed, and results reported, within one day of specimen collection and 80% within two days of specimen collection. To date, only 45% of tests were completed within one day and 77% of tests within two days, with most PHUs reportedly not meeting either testing target between March and August (ibid).

Assessment and testing activities for specific populations

On July 8, 2020, the province began piloting a new testing initiative, DriverCheck, which would make it easier for truck drivers, an essential worker class which received an exception to the US-Canada border closure, to access COVID-19 testing (Ontario, 2020dn). The program provided truck drivers with access to voluntary testing on a first-come, first-served basis at centres conveniently located at locations with high volume truck traffic, specifically at truck stops, and included mobile testing options. DriverCheck rolled out in phase between July 8 and September 8, 2020. DriverCheck is an existing private company which administers drug and alcohol testing for Ontario's trucking industry (ibid). The Government of

Ontario had also previously released an app to provide up-to-date information for truck drivers during the pandemic.

Several communities have also offered mobile assessment and testing centers throughout the pandemic (Ontario Health Coalition, 2020). For example, in response to the rising number of cases observed on their campus at the start of the new academic year, the University of Western Ontario began operating a mobile testing clinic in a trailer (UWO, 2020). Further, the City of Toronto retooled 6 decommissioned buses to create mobile testing centers to deploy to areas faced with difficulties attending its traditional brick and mortar testing centers (Chidley-Hill, 2020).

On September 16, the province introduced a new voluntary screening tool to assist parents and students with their daily assessments prior to attending in-person classes (Ontario, 2020gb). The tool was developed in-house by the Ontario Digital Service.

As described above, on October 1, the province introduced revised testing recommendations for school children which would require fewer children (and their families) to be tested for COVID-19. Notably, several PHUs have since introduced stricter recommendations for testing and quarantine of symptomatic children. For example, since December 4, Peel and Toronto regions updated their guidance to recommend that children with only one symptom, such as headache, be tested or quarantine before returning to classes (Peel, 2020; Toronto Public Health, 2020).

On October 19, the first Indigenous-led assessment and testing center opened in the province, located in Toronto (St. Michael's Hospital, 2020). The center also provides case management, contact tracing, outreach and offers referrals.

In response to Peel region's worsening epidemiological situation, as marked by growing case counts, regions were percent positivity near or above 20%, long testing wait times, etc., the province announced on November 9 that it was providing additional supports to hotspot areas in Peel (Ontario, 2020in). This included three new community-based assessment and testing centers in the City of Brampton, as well as mobile sites to communities where travel is a barrier. The province also announced it would be opening limited walk-in availability at assessment centers for those unable to book online or via telephone. Further, seven additional pharmacies or specimen collection centres opened, in partnership with private testing companies LifeLabs, Dynacare and Alpha (ibid). 70 additional case and contact managements were also deployed to Peel Public Health and 10 other PHUs with low COVID-19 case counts assisted Peel with contact and case management (ibid). The province also invested CA\$42M, through *Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*, to support 234 additional hospital beds at the region's three hospitals and multiple other alternate health facilities (ibid).

On December 21, the Government of Ontario announced its *COVID-19 High Priority Communities Strategy*, which outlined specific resources for high-risk communities, such as racially diverse, newcomer and low-income communities (Ontario, 2020II). The strategy allocated CA\$12.5M in funding to local agencies working with provincial authorities (i.e., Ontario Health, public health units, municipalities, and other partners) to deliver targeted interventions to the province's 15 hardest-hit neighbourhoods in Peel, Toronto, York, Ottawa and Durham regions (ibid). These 15 communities were selected given their high incidence of COVID-19, low testing rates, and unique sociodemographic barriers to testing and self-isolation. For example, teams of community ambassadors were deployed to provide tailored community

outreach and engagement, and community case managers would offer wraparound supports to connect residents with available resources, such as those to support persons in isolation. An additional C\$42M was also made available to support the creation of isolation centers in these communities (Ontario, 2020II); at the date of the announcement, isolation centers were operating in Toronto, Peel, and Ottawa (ibid). It was also announced that additional testing sites would be opened in these regions in the weeks to follow (ibid).

2. Ensuring sufficient physical infrastructure and workforce capacity

Infrastructure and workforce capacity are crucial for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, as there may be both a surge in demand and a decreased availability of health workers. This section considers the physical infrastructure available in the jurisdiction and where there are shortages, it describes any measures being implemented or planned to address them. It also considers the health workforce, including what jurisdictions are doing to maintain or enhance capacity, the responsibilities and skill-mix of the workforce, and any initiatives to train, protect or otherwise support health workers.

2.1 Physical infrastructure

Health system capacity

In Ontario, historically over-crowded hospitals have given rise to the ongoing and growing problem of so-called “hallway medicine” (Crawley, 2020a). Independent of the current crisis, hospitals in Ontario’s biggest cities are often filled beyond capacity, leaving no room for a surge in capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ontario hospital beds are often occupied with patients waiting to receive care elsewhere, such as a LTC home (Health Quality Ontario, 2018). As of December 2019, the province had 1.4 acute beds per 1,000 population (OHA, 2019).

Early in the pandemic, the provincial government announced it was working with Telehealth, the province’s telephone-based health helpline, to ensure the service was supported to meet the increased call volumes by recruiting more staff and acquiring additional telephone lines (D’Mello, 2020a). On March 15, 2020, the government asked that all hospitals in Ontario ramp down elective surgeries and other non-emergent clinical activity to preserve capacity to treat COVID-19 patients; this directive was ordered by the CMOH, effective March 19, following the declaration of the province’s state of emergency, please see Section 3.1 for more details (Ministry of Health, 2020).

On March 25, the government announced their *Ontario’s Action Plan 2020: Responding to COVID-19*, outlining their specific investments in the health care sector, including investing CA\$3.3 billion to increase capacity (Ontario, 2020s). This included CA\$100 million to increase capacity and assessment centres in hospitals, CA\$50 million for more testing and screening, CA\$50 million to protect front-line workers by increasing the supply of PPE, CA\$25 million to support staff working in COVID-19 assessment centres, CA\$50 million for to support 24/7 screening in LTC homes, CA\$5 million to protect seniors in retirement homes through increased infection control and screening measures, and CA\$4 million for Indigenous communities to support transportation costs for health care professionals serving in remote areas and the distribution of critical supplies.

On April 8, the government announced it would extend construction hours for essential construction projects in the health care sector to work 24 hours a day (Office of the Premier, 2020a). This means that work on new hospitals, expansions of existing health care facilities, and creation of COVID-19 assessment centres can occur anytime throughout the day or night, to increase the speed of construction; however, employers were required to take various steps to protect the health and safety of workers on these job sites (Office of the Premier, 2020a).

On April 16, the government announced they had expanded hospital capacity in Ontario by adding 1,035 acute care beds and 1,492 critical care beds to prepare for a surge in capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario, 2020aq). As a result of this, Ontario now has 20,354 acute care beds, with the potential for an additional 4,205 acute care beds by the end of April (Ontario, 2020aq). Throughout April, additional plans for the creation of “field hospitals”, temporary COVID-19 hospital wards, and possible adaptation of other existing sites (e.g. gymnasiums or hotels) were also announced; while several of these temporary hospital sites were constructed during the first wave, they were never used (Bogdan, 2020).

In response to the unequal burden the pandemic had placed upon residents of LTC facilities, the Ontario government announced a redesigned LTC funding model on July 15, 2020. The new funding model outlined new funding (CA\$1.75B) towards the construction of new LTC facilities, including nearly 8,000 new LTC beds, across the province over the next five years, and approaches towards accelerating the construction of these urgently needed new facilities (Government of Ontario, 2020). The plan also introduced new, modern design standards for LTC facilities, including the mandatory installation of air conditioning in all newly built and renovated facilities. On July 21, the new Accelerated Build Pilot Program was introduced, which would lead to the construction of two new LTC facilities over the following months and add up to 640 new LTC beds – in addition to the 8,000 announced in the week prior – by 2021 (Ontario, 2020dx). Notably, the plan leveraged several innovative measures to accelerate construction, such as modular construction and the use of existing hospital lands. On July 28, plans for a new LTC facility located just outside of Toronto were announced; by building on an existing hospital site, the new 320-bed LTC site was expected to be completed by 2021 (Ontario, 2020ef). On August 11, another new site was announced, adding another 320 new LTC beds (Ontario, 2020ev).

On September 9, the province announced a CA\$19.4M investment towards the expansion of health care services, and particularly culturally appropriate services, at a Indigenous community health care center in Northern Ontario (Ontario, 2020fs). Specifically, the funding would support the construction of a new, modern hospital, including 36 inpatient beds and a 32-bed lodge located in the community of Moosonee, to support the involvement of community Elders in patient care (ibid).

On September 14, the provincial government announced a CA\$175M investment to address critical upgrades, repairs and maintenance in 129 hospitals across the province, including CA\$50M in projects related to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020fz).

On September 25, the province announced another CA\$741M investment to support efforts reducing the backlog of essential services caused during the earlier reduction of services, and expanding access and capacity to care to provide additional capacity for the second wave of COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020gn). This included the creation of 139 new critical care beds and 1,349 hospital beds to support more surgical

procedures and CA\$283.7M to support additional priority surgeries, extend diagnostic imaging hours, and initializing a central waitlist (ibid). Dedicated funding for virtual care was also included.

On October 15, the province announced the creation of over 200 new transitional care beds across the province, to be used for patients transitioning out of hospital and into home, community or LTC facilities (Ontario, 2020hn). Space for these beds was made possible by renovating existing spaces in current or formerly operating health care facilities.

On October 23, the Government of Ontario announced a new CA\$8.7M investment to support the construction of a new, modern hospital in Southeastern Ontario (Ontario, 2020hx).

On October 27, the province announced an investment of CA\$116.6M to create 766 new hospital beds across 32 of the province's hospitals and alternate health facilities (Ontario, 2020hz). This new funding was in addition to the CA\$2.8M previously announced as part of the province's COVID-19 fall preparedness plan.

On November 3, the Government of Ontario announced it was selling some of its surplus land across the province with the stipulation that the land be used exclusively to create three new LTC facilities, supporting the creation of nearly 900 new LTC beds across the province (Ontario, 2020ii).

On November 5, the province released its *2020 Budget: Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*, which would bring the province's total investments towards the COVID-19 health response to CA\$15.2B, including CA\$4B in 2021-2022 and CA\$2B in 2022-2023 (Ontario, 2020ij). Throughout 2020-2021, the province would provide CA\$2.8B to support its *Fall Preparedness Plan for Health, Long-Term Care and Education* and CA\$572M to Ontario's hospitals to support additional costs incurred during the pandemic and over CA\$18B in capital grants, over ten years, to support the construction of new and expanded hospital infrastructure, including urgent repairs and modernization projects (ibid). The budget also outlined funding to construct a new state-of-the art hospital in York Region, which would be the first newly built hospital in the province in three decades (ibid).

On November 6, the province announced an investment of nearly CA\$45M, through *Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*, to create 254 new hospital and alternate care beds across Ottawa, address ambulance wait times, and hire more frontline staff (Ontario, 2020il).

On November 12, the province announced a new CA\$761M investment to construct 11,000 new, modern LTC spaces across the province, including the construction and renovation of 74 LTC facilities (Ontario, 2020ir). On November 20, the province further announced the creation of 2,983 new, modern LTC beds across the province, including the construction of 23 new buildings and 19,68 new beds, and 19 renovated sites and 1,105 upgraded beds (Ontario, 2020jb); three of which would target francophone clients and two Indigenous clients, including one operated by an Indigenous community partner.

Medical equipment and supplies

On March 31, 2020, Premier Ford announced that Ontario may be very close to facing shortages of critical medical supplies (Jones, 2020b). Media stories also highlighted the concerns of health care workers in terms of the supply of PPE. One article, published on March 25, told of a nurse in Toronto who stated that there was a "massive shortage" in PPE, including surgical masks, explaining that hospitals are limiting the amount of PPE handed out to nurses and doctors each shift (Russell, 2020). Another article, published on

March 26, stated that staff at The Ottawa Hospital were being asked to limit themselves to two masks per shift to prepare for the influx of patients – and, thus, PPE needs (Trihn, 2020).

As of March 27, the Government of Ontario announced that 3,250 ventilators were ready to be deployed across the province (Westoll, 2020). This included ventilators currently used in hospitals, anesthesia machines, and machines stockpiled during the previous SARS and H1N1 pandemics (Westoll, 2020). In the meantime, Health Minister Elliot announced on March 28 that “[the Ministry] has been successful in entering into contracts” to provide the province with up to 10,000 additional ventilators and millions of gloves, surgical masks, and N95 respirators (Ministry of Health, 2020j).

On March 28, the provincial government enacted the *Supply Chain Management Act* to ensure critical supplies could be delivered across the province (Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, 2020). Under these regulations, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and the MOH could centrally manage all public sector supply chains. Following this, on March 31, the Ontario government announced the launch of a website, Ontario Together, to help businesses and their employees work with the province to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario, 2020ab). The website supports the identification of supply challenges across the province and provides a venue for the government to solicit ideas from businesses and manufacturers on how the government can work with them to meet their needs during the pandemic. The website has also facilitated Ontarian manufacturers to retool their facilities to support the production of essential equipment, including ventilators, test swabs, and masks.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government of Ontario has called on businesses and organizations to supply emergency products and have asked manufacturers to consider whether they can re-configure their production facilities to produce PPE and other supplies, such as hand sanitizer (Ontario, 2020o). Notably, many of these investments and efforts towards securing local manufacturing of PPE followed political tensions in April between Premier Ford and US President Trump, following a cease of exports of N95 masks from the US (Tsekouras, 2020a).

On April 1, the government announced a new CA\$50 million fund to support these local production efforts and help businesses provide more innovative solutions or retool their operations to manufacture essential medical supplies and equipment (Ontario, 2020ab). On April 12, the government confirmed it had secured 13 million surgical and procedural masks, 200,000 N95 respirator masks, and 38 new ventilators (Ontario, 2020am). For example, on May 6, the province announced that, through the Ontario Together Fund, they would be providing Virox Technologies Inc. with CA\$850,000 to help them double their production of disinfectants and create additional jobs to support PPE manufacturing in Ontario (Ministry of Economic Development, 2020a). On May 19, the government announced it was working with Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX) to provide free support to non-medical manufacturing companies as they retool to provide essential supplies and equipment to various health care facilities across the province; namely, MIX provided medical advisory services to assistance businesses with navigating regulatory hurdles and increase efficiencies (Ontario, 2020x). The Premier stated that this would increase the self-sufficiency of the province and support preparation for future outbreaks and pandemics (Ontario, 2020x).

On July 14, the Government of Ontario announced new financial supports for increasing Ontario’s PPE manufacturing capacity. Specifically, through the Ontario Together Fund, the Ontario-based Eclipse Innovations Inc. would receive CA\$1.4M to scale up its PPE manufacturing operations (Ontario, 2020dr).

The new capacity would support the production of one million N95 respirators per week, reportedly to support domestic market demand and ensure a safe reopening of Ontario's economy (ibid).

On August 21, the Government of Ontario announced it was partnering with 3M Canada to expand its existing production facility in Ontario to produce N95 masks such that it could support local needs throughout the pandemic (Ontario, 2020fg). The federal and provincial governments provided CA\$23.33M to expand the facility. During their five-year agreement, 50 million respirators would be sourced annually, beginning in early 2021; these N95 masks would be shared equally between Ontario and the federal government (ibid). The following day, the province announced another investment of CA\$455,000, through the Ontario Together Fund, to support the retooling of another local company, a dairy distillery, in retooling to transform one of its dairy sugar by-products into hand sanitizer (Ontario, 2020fi). Through its existing "buy one to give one" program, the company had already donated over 30,000 bottles of hand sanitizer to local groups in need; this new investment would allow them to triple their production, to 220,000 liters per year (ibid).

On August 24, the province announced another investment in made-in-Ontario medical supplies through a CA\$294,000 investment, from the Ontario Together Fund, to support a local brewery in retooling to produce hand sanitizer (Ontario, 2020fh). The brewery planned to produce 100,000 litres of hand sanitizer to supply local hospitals, pharmacies, and grocers, as well as donations to local senior care facilities and first responders (ibid).

On September 4, the province announced a CA\$2M investment, from the Ontario Together Fund, to support a local company in producing 200,000 "light, breathable, and comfortable" face masks per month (Ontario, 2020fq). The masks, which include an N95 filter, are targeted for use by health care workers and others required to wear face masks for a prolonged period of time and designed to prevent the fatigue associated with prolong face mask use (ibid).

On September 8, the province announced, as part of its CA\$1.3B back-to-school investment, it would procure 37 million pieces of additional PPE for schools (Ontario, 2020n). Specifically, in collaboration with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, the province stated that activities were underway to ensure sufficient PPE would be delivered to all 72 school boards and 10 education authorities, including over 19.5 million masks, 16 million gloves, 317,000 face shields, 320,000 bottles of hand sanitizer, and 218,000 containers of disinfectant, among other critical supplies (ibid).

On September 15, the province announce a CA\$2.5M investment, through the Ontario Together Fund, to support on Ontario-based company in retooling its assembling line to produce 10,000 ventilators (Ontario, 2020ga).

On October 13, the Government of Ontario announced a CA\$1.4M investment, through the Ontario Together Fund, in a local company to expand its production of COVID-19 testing supplies (Ontario, 2020hj). Later that week, on October 16, the province announced that an international hand sanitizer company would be investing CA\$75M in their Ontario-based facility to produce more hand sanitizer to support Ontarians throughout the pandemic; the Ontario government would also be providing CA\$2.5M, through the Ontario Together Fund, to further support these efforts (Ontario, 2020hp). Through the upgrades, the company would be able to produce over 114 million litres of medical-grade alcohol.

On November 13, the province announced a CA\$350,000 investment, through the Ontario Together fund, to support a local plastics company in increasing its production of face shields by 49%; thereby allowing the company to create almost four million face shields per month (Ontario, 2020it).

On December 1, the province announced a CA\$0.55M investment, through the Ontario Together Fund, to support local manufacturers in retooling or scaling up productions to produce PPE for both adults and children (Ontario, 2020jv).

On December 9, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of over CA\$5M, through the Ontario Together Fund, to support three local companies in designing and producing respirators and surgical masks for frontline and health care workers during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020kg).

On December 18, the province announced CA\$332,000 in support, from the Ontario Together Fund, to a company based in Peel region to produce face mask with a lip-reading lens, which would support deaf and hearing impaired individuals (Ontario, 2020li). The company plans to produce 1.4 million of these so-called “My Access Masks” (ibid).

2.2 Workforce

Workforce capacity

Throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, various measures have been taken to support the availability and safety of health care workers. On March 21, 2020, the Government of Ontario released an order permitting Ontario hospitals to redeploy staff to different facilities of the hospital or COVID-19 assessment centres; change the assignment of work or the schedule of work or shift assignments for staff; defer or cancel vacations or leaves; employ extra part-time staff or contractors; use volunteers to perform work, where relevant; and provide training to staff to achieve redeployment plans (Ontario, 2020n). A similar order was announced on March 24 specific to LTC homes which gave operators of LTC homes the ability to reassign staff, identify staffing priorities, and develop, modify, and implement redeployment plans (MLTC, 2020c). Additional measures were announced on March 28, allowing the MLTC to redeploy inspectors to help ensure the safety and security of LTC residents (MLTC, 2020d).

To support increased health care capacity, the government launched a new Health Workforce Matching Portal on April 7 (Office of the Premier, 2020q). The portal offers health care providers, including retired or non-active health professionals, internationally educated health professionals, students, or volunteers with a range of experiences to join in the province's response to COVID-19 (Office of the Premier, 2020q).

Stated as an effort to recognize the dedication, long-hours and increased risk of working on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, on April 25, the provincial government announced they would be providing frontline workers with pandemic pay (Office of the Premier, 2020ag). The wage increase was CA\$4 per hour, on top of existing hourly wages, regardless of the employee's hourly wage. As well, employees working over 100 hours per month will receive lump sum payments of CA\$250 per month for each of the next four months.

On May 1, the Premier issued an emergency order giving hospitals the ability to appoint, re-appoint, and grant medical privileges to medical and professional staff to deal with COVID-19 cases (Ontario, 2020bc). This order focused on reducing administration challenges and authorized coroners and public health officials to access provincial health records in an effort to reduce the time needed to perform death

investigations and exposure to COVID-19 related cases. It also allowed registered nurses who were appointed as coroners to complete medical certificates of death, a role traditionally restricted to physicians and nurse practitioners (Ontario, 2020bc).

To further enhance health care workforce capacity, on May 9, the Government of Ontario issued an emergency order that enabled school board employees to be voluntarily redeployed to congregate care settings during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020bh). These settings include hospitals, LTC homes, retirement homes and women's shelters. Under the order, school boards are authorized to develop and implement staff redeployment plans (Ontario, 2020bh). In another announcement, on May 13, the Ontario government stated it was working with the education sector to place employees in the congregate living sector (Ontario, 2020bl). An online portal was also announced, where education sector staff can register to be matched with congregate settings facing staffing shortages; positions include custodial, maintenance, food preparation, children and youth service workers, social workers and educational assistants. Educational staff who volunteer to be redeployed were eligible for the temporary pandemic premium and emergency child care (Ontario, 2020bl).

As mentioned in Section 2.1, the Government of Ontario has been increasing hospital capacity throughout by taking measures to source additional acute care and critical care beds. The province has also taken measures to ensure there is sufficient staff to care for COVID-19 patients, including redeploying surgical nurses to medicine units, sharing emergency and intensive-care unit (ICU) nurses across units, sharing physicians across hospitals in a given region, and recruiting family doctors and retired physician and nursing staff to hospitals (Ontario, 2020aq).

On August 19, the Government of Ontario announced it was investing CA\$149,2000, from the Ontario Together Fund, in a made-in-Ontario physician scheduling software package (Ontario, 2020fc). The cloud-based scheduling package would allow physicians to enter their availability and expertise and be matched with hospitals and clinics in need of their support; thereby, reducing administrative burden, while effectively using Ontario's available workforce capacity. Further, the software can automate the distribution of shifts to support the needs of doctors, patients, and clinics, with the aim of improving patient wait times and optimizing shift distribution for physicians (ibid). The company also plans to extend the software to support staff scheduling in LTC facilities.

On September 23, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development announced its launch of a new recruitment campaign focused on frontline health and safety inspectors. Particularly, the province aimed to increase its number of labour inspectors by 98 to support the monitoring of public health measures in workplaces across the province (Ontario, 2020gi); recruitment would reportedly begin in October 2020, at a cost of CA\$11.6M per year.

On October 1, the province announced a CA\$461M investment to support an immediate, temporary wage increase for personal support workers (PSWs) and frontline support workers in home, community and LTC facilities across the province (Ontario, 2020gt). Specifically, eligible staff in home. Community and LTC facilities would receive a top-up of CA\$3 per hour; staff in child, community and social services providing direct support for activities of daily living would also receive a CA\$3 per hour top-up; and eligible workers in public hospitals would receive a CA\$2 per hour top-up (ibid). Reportedly, these top-ups would be regularly reviewed, with the potential to remain in place until March 31, 2021.

On November 5, the province released its *2020 Budget: Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*, which outlined CA\$7.5B in new funding for pandemic responses, including increases to staff funding to provide a minimum of four hours of daily care to every LTC facility resident, e.g. from a nurse or PSW (Ontario, 2020ij).

On November 9, the province launched a call for individuals interested in supporting the LTC sector, with a particular interest in recruiting those who had become unemployed or displaced (e.g. from retail) as a result of the pandemic (Ontario, 2020iq). Specifically, *The Ontario Workforce Reserve for Senior Support* program would recruit, train and deploy individuals as resident support aides (RSA) to work in LTC facilities and support residents with activities of daily living, coordinate visitation, and support with technology use (ibid). Recruits would be deployed to regions in greatest need, particularly affected LTC facilities in Toronto, Peel and Ottawa regions. Interested individuals could create a profile on the Ontario Matching Portal, where they would be screened, trained and matched with a facility requiring support (ibid). Between its launch in April and early November 2020, the Ontario Matching Portal had reportedly supported over 650 staffing matches to LTC facilities across the province (Ontario, 2020iq).

Workforce training

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, there have been numerous training activities related to the proper use of PPE and infection prevention and control throughout the pandemic.

On October 5, 2020, the province announced a C\$0.5M investment to support the training of 92 residents in Niagara region train for PSW careers (Ontario, 2020gy); the 40-week training program would commence September 8. Notably, unemployment rates in the Niagara area had more than doubled during the pandemic (11.3% in August versus 5.5% in February) and the region needed more PSWs to support its population, a popular region for retirees in Ontario (ibid).

As mentioned above, on November 5, the province announced CA\$7.5B in new funding for pandemic responses, including increases to staff funding to provide a minimum of four hours of daily care to every LTC facility resident, e.g. from a nurse or PSW (Ontario, 2020ij); the plan includes hard targets to achieve this four-hour goal by 2024-2025 (ibid). On December 17, the Premier and Minister of Long-term Care announced the launch of one of the largest recruitment and training drives in the province's history to deliver on this commitment, including its long-term care staffing plan which outlines the hiring of more staff, improving working conditions for existing staff, improvements to leadership, and staff retention strategies (Ontario, 2020lb).

Workforce support

On March 22, 2020, the Ontario government announced new initiatives to ensure frontline staff can continue to work throughout the pandemic by providing access to local emergency child care (Ministry of Education, 2020a). As part of the provincial government's *Action Plan*, described in Section 2.1, Ontario invested CA\$3.3 billion to increase health care capacity (Ontario, 2020s). As mentioned above, on April 3, the provincial government announced its plan to increase PHU capacity. The order also provided PHUs increased authority to make staffing decisions to support the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (MOH, 2020m). On April 17, the government expanded its list of essential workers eligible to receive emergency child care to include staff working in developmental services, victim services, violence against women services, anti-human trafficking services, child welfare services and children's residential settings,

shelters, power workers, pharmaceutical and medical supply workers, non-municipal water and wastewater employees, federally employed staff, and other staff identified by the Ministry of the Solicitor General (Ontario, 2020ar). On April 29, the government announced that more frontline workers would be eligible for emergency child care, including people who work in the food supply chain, retirement homes, grocery stores, pharmacies, and the military (Ontario, 2020az).

On April 2, the provincial government announced new funding to support mental health, especially among frontline workers (Office of the Premier, 2020n). Specifically, the province invested CA\$12 million to expand online and virtual mental health supports and CA\$2.6 million to hire new psychologists and other mental health workers to support Ontario Provincial Police personnel.

On June 9, as the province began to reopen, it was announced that the government plans to gradually wind down emergency child care services by June 26, as more child care centres begin to reopen. Families using the emergency child care service would be assisted by service system managers to transition back to their original child care arrangements or registered to a new space (Ontario, 2020cj).

3. Providing health services effectively

This section describes approaches for service delivery planning and patient pathways for suspected COVID-19 cases. It also considers efforts by jurisdictions to maintain other essential services during periods of excessive demand for health services.

3.1 Planning services

Infection control

On March 30, 2020, a joint statement was issued by the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Nurses' Association announcing new measures to protect frontline nurses from COVID-19 (MOH, 2020m). Specifically, new standards outlined precautions for interactions with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases and point-of-care risk assessments for every patient interaction to assess appropriate health and safety measures; standards for training on safe use of PPE were also included (MOH, 2020m). Investments made through *Ontario's Action Plan 2020: Responding to COVID-19* also included CA\$62 million to provide more physicians, nurses, and personal support workers in rural and remote communities (Ontario, 2020s).

In response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in LTC homes, on April 14, the Government of Ontario announced an emergency order to prevent LTC employees from working at multiple facilities (DeClerq, 2020a). On April 17, two further emergency measures for LTC homes were announced, which provided local health integration networks and home care service providers the flexibility to reassign staff to where they are most needed and provided municipalities authority to reassign child care and public health service staff to where they are needed (Ontario, 2020as).

On April 30, the province provided employers with workplace safety guidelines to protect workers, customers and the general public in preparation of a gradual reopening of the provincial economy (Office of the Premier, 2020c). These guidelines include managing traffic flow using barriers and marking, installing plexiglass barriers, updating ventilation and air intake, promoting workplace sanitation and

providing personal protection equipment; posters that promote safety tips are also included (Office of the Premier, 2020c).

Prioritized reduction of services

On March 15, 2020, in consultation with the Ontario Hospital Association, the Minister of Health requested hospitals cancel all non-urgent and elective surgeries (Ministry of Health, 2020). As of March 25, the province's overall hospital capacity was approximately 76.6%, about 20% lower than that time the year prior (Westoll, 2020). Government officials also advocated for moving alternate level of care (ALC) patients to non-hospital facilities, including nursing and retirement homes, and the delivery of home care (Westoll, 2020). As such, on March 24, the Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care amended the *Long-Term Care Homes Act* to facilitate placements in LTC facilities and help address capacity pressures faced by hospitals (Westoll, 2020). These measures were made to expedite placements of eligible patients through truncated processes, keep patients on waiting lists should they decide to move into the LTC home after the pandemic, and enable current residents to leave a LTC home, if they wish, and expedite any returns (Westoll, 2020).

COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy

Notably, to reduce demand on health care services and COVID-19 testing, due to the similarity in symptoms, on September 22, 2020, Ontario launched its largest ever influenza vaccination campaign (Ontario, 2020gh). The campaign was part of the province's *Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19* plan, which sets out a series of activities to prevent, identify and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks during the fall second wave. Specifically, the province invested almost CA\$70M to purchase 5.1 million doses of influenza vaccine, (700,000 more than the year prior; this also included 1.3 million doses of high-dose vaccine for seniors) (ibid). Early distribution was prioritized for residents of LTC and retirement homes and other hospitalized populations. The influenza vaccine is delivered freely to residents, over six months of age, through the *Universal Influenza Immunization Program* (UIIP); in addition to the traditional intramuscular vaccine, the nasal influenza spray is also available.

Throughout November, as the province anticipated the pending approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine by Health Canada, Canada's health regulatory body, the Ontario government called on the federal government to provide details regarding Canada's COVID-19 distribution strategy (Ontario, 2020jp).

On November 23, the Government of Ontario announced the creation of the Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force, which would advise the province on the development and implementation of its COVID-19 vaccination program (Ontario, 2020jf). Specific members of the task force would be announced later, but the task force would be chaired by a retired high-ranking military leader, General Rick Hillier (ibid).

On December 1, the province announced it would be working with industry experts from a range of sectors to ensure the safe and efficient distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine across Ontario, described as the "largest logistical undertaking in a generation" (Ontario, 2020ju). Provincial authorities stated that Ontario will be ready by December 31 to receive the vaccine, with the first doses expected to be delivered in early 2021 (ibid). On December 4, the province officially announced the other 9 members of its COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force, including Dr. Huyer, an infectious disease physician, CEO of

the province's air ambulance service, an ethicist, a pharmacist, a First Nations Chief, the former Toronto Policy Chief, and two CEOs of two private companies (Ontario, 2020jy).

On December 7, the Government of Ontario announced it was ready to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it became available and, as recommended by the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, the province had identified which populations would receive the vaccine first: LTC and retirement facility residents and staff (Ontario, 2020kb). They further stated that COVID-19 vaccines are expected to only be initially available to non-pregnant adults over 18 years old and delivery would focus on high-risk individuals living in hotspot regions, namely those classified as Grey or Red according to the province's color-coded framework (ibid). Officials stated that, as further information becomes available from clinical trials and Health Canada, additional groups would be considered for the province's vaccination program.

On December 11, the province officially announced its three-phase COVID-19 vaccination delivery plan, which would start with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine recently approved by Health Canada on December 9 (Ontario, 2020km). Phase One was dubbed the "vaccine readiness pilot project", a collaborative effort between the province, Health Canada and Pfizer-BioNTech (ibid). Planned to start December 16, the pilot would vaccinate over 2,500 frontline health care workers, namely those in hospitals and LTC facilities, in Toronto (University Health Network) and Ottawa (The Ottawa Hospital). These sites were reportedly selected given their existing trained staff and refrigeration facilities (ibid). Reportedly, the pilot will inform the province's preparedness plan to receive larger vaccine quantities and test the logistics of delivery and post-vaccine surveillance, among other opportunities.

Provincial authorities also stated they were expecting to receive up to 90,000 doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine from the federal government before the end of 2020, a per capita estimate, and planned to deliver vaccine to up to 14 hospitals located in Grey and Red regions across the province (Ontario, 2020km). Target groups included health care workers in hospitals, LTC, retirement and other congregate settings caring for seniors. The province further announced it expected between 35,000 and 85,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine, once approved, which would support the province in expanding vaccination to LTC facilities in Grey regions.

On December 14, the first person in Ontario (and Canada) received the COVID-19 vaccine – a personal support worker from a Toronto-based LTC facility (Ontario, 2020kn).

On December 18, the province announced plans to expand its vaccine delivery program to 17 more hospitals over the following 2-week period, including sites located in hotspot regions (Ontario, 2020le). The province expected to expand its vaccination program to over 20 hospital across the province by the end of January (Ontario, 2020km). With the pending approval of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the province planned to expand vaccination to LTC, retirement and other congregate care facilities for seniors, PHUs, and adults in First Nations, Metis and Indigenous populations (ibid).

The province plans to move Phase Two of its vaccination implementation plan once vaccines become more widely available; i.e., winter of 2021 (Ontario, 2020km). During Phase Two, vaccinations will be administered to more health care workers, residents in LTC and retirement facilities, home care patients with chronic conditions and additional First Nation communities and urban Indigenous populations, including Métis and Inuit adults (ibid).

In Phase Three, any Ontarian who wishes to receive a COVID-19 vaccine will be eligible; no anticipated date for the start of Phase Three has yet been provided (Ontario, 2020km). The province assured that vaccines would not be mandatory, but all residents are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID-19 (ibid).

As of December 21, over 3,000 frontline health care workers had been vaccinated against COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020lk)

3.2 Managing cases

Patient pathway and treatment protocol

In Ontario, the regular pathway for a suspected case of COVID-19 is as follows: (1) if you may have been exposed to the virus or are experiencing symptoms, use the province's online Interactive Self-Assessment Tool for guidance; (2) contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for further assessment; (3) upon recommendation, visit a designated assessment centre for a COVID-19 test; (4) depending on the severity of symptoms, guidance will be made to either self-isolate at home or at a health care facility for treatment. Please refer to Sections 1.3 and 1.4 for more detail regarding the province's specific isolation and monitoring guidelines and Section 1.5 for more detail regarding the province's testing criteria, testing capacity and updates. The following section further details the provincial measures for managing cases of COVID-19.

Ontarians are advised to contact their primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario, a pre-existing free service which connects Ontarians with a registered nurse 24/7, if they experience symptoms of the coronavirus (PHAC, 2020c). On March 23, Ontario released an interactive self-assessment tool that aims to help individuals determine when and where to seek care (Ontario, 2020r). Based on their responses, individuals are told to either continue to practice social distancing, self-isolate, call a primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario, visit an assessment centre, or call 911/go to the nearest appropriate ED (PHAC, 2020c).

The Government of Ontario has created guidance documents with basic information on screening, testing, reporting, and safety measures related to the care of COVID-19 patients (MOH, 2020m). On March 27, 2020, the Government of Ontario issued guidance on the use of N95 masks beyond the manufacturer designated shelf life for use in fit testing, training and droplet/contact precautions (MOH, 2020a). Documents are available for various health care contexts including primary care providers in the community, acute care, home and community care providers, paramedic services, independent health facilities, and pharmacies, among others (MOH, 2020m). The Government of Ontario also provides specific guidance for settings experiencing outbreaks, such as LTC facilities, as well as specific guidance for homeless shelters, group homes and co-living settings (MOH, 2020k, 2020j, 2020n). Targeted guidance is also provided for food premises, industry operators and temporary foreign workers (MOH, 2020d, 2020h, 2020i).

On March 28, Ontario Health published a "triage protocol" for doctors who may be forced to make ethically fraught decisions over how to ration critical care beds and ventilators, if the pandemic were to surge beyond existing health care capacity (Yang, 2020a). The provincial government has also recognized that a triage system should be prepared to allocate critical care resources in the event of a surge in demand, defined as a system operating at 130% capacity or more (Yang, 2020a). Reportedly, the decision

to activate this triage system will be made regionally and treatment decisions for specific patients will be made by a team of people (Yang, 2020a). The protocol outlines three guiding principles; (1) utility—physicians should allocate resources to patients who would benefit the most; (2) proportionality—the number of patients who will be negatively affected by the triage should not exceed the number of patients who should stand to benefit; and (3) fairness—only clinical information should be used to guide treatment (Yang, 2020a). The Government of Ontario also has dedicated 24/7 hotlines for health care providers to provide access to on-call specialists, arrange for bed access, and facilitate urgent triage, as necessary (MOH, 2020l).

On May 13, the MOH released a statement about multisystem inflammatory vasculitis; specifically, the provincial case definition of COVID-19 was revised to include multisystem inflammatory vasculitis as an atypical presentation in children (Ontario, 2020bj). This was reportedly intended to help physicians and health care professionals in their assessments of children, following international case reports, despite the link between multisystem inflammatory vasculitis and COVID-19 not yet being understood (Ontario, 2020bj).

Home care and long-term care

On April 15, 2020, the MOH issued a guidance document outlining protocols and recommendations for the LTC facilities experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 (MOH, 2020o); however, similar guidance was also available in the province's 2018 Control of *Respiratory Infection Outbreaks in Long-Term Care Homes* guidance document (ibid). Specifically, the MOH recommended all facilities actively screen staff, essential visitors and residents; staff and visitors should wear appropriate PPE, including masks; physical distancing should be practiced; and LTC facilities experiencing an outbreak must implement staff and resident cohorting, among other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (ibid). In smaller facilities where cohorting cannot be achieved, it is recommended that residents be managed as potentially infected, e.g., staff should use droplet and contact precautions (ibid). On June 15, PHO released its first guidance document to PHUs outlining specific recommendations for the cohorting of residents and staff in congregate living settings, with a focus on facilities experiencing an outbreak (PHO, 2020d).

On April 22, the Ontario government requested assistance from the federal government in the form of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel to provide support in especially hard-hit LTC homes to enhance staffing, infection prevention and control (IPAC), case management, activities of daily living, and safety (Ontario, 2020av). On May 10, CAF reported that 15 out of 20 categories that they were tasked with inspecting were considered high risk (Ontario, 2020bs). On May 14, CAF released a detailed report outlining their findings on the conditions at five LTC homes, which were described as "deeply disturbing" due to the poor sanitation, inappropriate care for residents, abusive behaviour towards them and more (Treble, 2020). As of May 25, 13 out of the 15 categories were no longer classified as high risk by CAF (Ontario, 2020br). Similar observations and requests for provincial support in LTC homes have also been made by notable medical leaders in the province. For example, Dr. Jane Philpott, the previous federal Minister of Health, has been very vocal about her observations while volunteering her medical expertise to support Participation House, a LTC home for adults with severe mental, physical and developmental disabilities in Markham, Ontario (Warnica, 2020a). She described the situation at Participation House as one which "shook her like little else has in her long medical career" (Warnica, 2020a). On May 26, the Ontario government announced that it was requesting an extension of the current deployment by another

30 days to help with continuing quality of care improvements and accurate investigating and reporting in LTC homes; further, additional homes have since received support from CAF or near-by hospitals (Ontario, 2020bs).

On May 13, the provincial government issued an emergency order supporting the immediate addition to, or change of, management to protect staff and residents during a COVID-19 outbreak in LTC homes (Ontario, 2020bi). This management assistance order would allow LTC homes to better manage an influx of cases, unresolved outbreaks, and even deaths. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis for each home or institution (Ontario, 2020bi).

On May 19, the MLTC announced an independent commission into Ontario's LTC system, set to begin in September 2020, which will review the current system, provide recommendations for how to improve it and better prepare for future outbreaks and pandemics (Ontario, 2020w).

On June 1, the Ontario Ombudsman launched an investigation into how the MLTC and the MOH have handled the province's LTC homes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario Ombudsman, 2020). This investigation was launched independently and in part triggered by the various concerns raised about the conditions of LTC homes across the province and the Canadian military report outlining shocking conditions (Ontario Ombudsman, 2020). This investigation will take into account the ministries policies and standards for LTC homes and the oversight mechanisms aimed at ensuring compliance with these standards (Ontario Ombudsman, 2020).

On June 2, the MLTC issued a 90-day Mandatory Management Order appointing St. Mary's General Hospital acting management of Forest Heights LTC (Ontario, 2020cd). This was done in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 that was not being properly handled and managed under Forest Heights initial management team (Ontario, 2020cd). Later that week, on June 4, the MLTC appointed William Osler Health System as interim manager of Woodbridge Vista Care Community LTC (Ontario, 2020cf). Reportedly, these orders would remain in effect until normal operations within the facilities could resume (Ontario, 2020cf).

After serving seven LTC facilities, the last CAF team left Ontario on July 3, 2020 (Ontario, 2020dg).

On July 29, the province launched an independent commission into COVID-19 in LTC, with the goals of investigating how COVID-19 spread within LTC facilities; how residents, staff, and families were impacted; the adequacy of measures taken by the province and other parties to prevent, isolate and contain COVID-19 in LTC; and measures that can protect LTC facilities from future outbreaks of COVID-19 and other pandemics (Ontario, 2020bo). The commission's final report is expected by April 2021.

On August 14, CAF delivered their exit report on their observations at the seven affected LTC facilities they supported during the COVID-19 pandemic, called *Operation LASER* (Ontario, 2020ey). The report outlined that all of their previous concerns had been addressed and the province was well equipped to oversee improvements going forward. However, there were outstanding concerns, including those pertaining to the need for training new staff and adequate supervision to ensure consistent infection prevention and control measures (ibid). According to the Minister of Health, both of these areas will be monitored closely by the ministry and LTC facility management.

Throughout the fall, as the province entered the second wave of the pandemic, a number of LTC facilities entered voluntary or mandatory management agreements with local hospitals or health care networks. On September 25, two LTC facilities in Ottawa entered new, voluntary 90-day management agreements with The Ottawa Hospital (Ontario, 2020go); both had been managed by the hospital since September 18, 2020 following an order issued by the Ottawa Public Health Unit under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Another LTC facility also entered into a temporary management agreement with The Ottawa Hospital on October 30, while in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak (Ontario, 2020ig).

On October 7, the MLTC facilitated a new, voluntary, temporary management agreement between a LTC facility in Toronto and a local hospital network, Unity Health (Ontario, 2020hc). On October 13, the MLTC issued a mandatory 90-day management order appointing a hospital in southwestern Ontario to take over management of a local LTC facility experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak (Ontario, 2020hi).

On October 23, the province announced that the Canadian Red Cross would be deploying teams to provide short-term support to one LTC facility in Ontario (Ontario, 2020hw). The Canadian Red Cross will support prevention control, daily living activities and socialize with residents, enabling frontline workers to focus on providing care to residents (ibid).

On October 28, a new mandatory management order was issued by the MLTC requiring a LTC facility in Niagara Falls to be taken temporality over by the Niagara Health System (Ontario, 2020ia). The facility was currently experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak among residents and staff.

On November 25, a LTC facility in Peel region was issued a mandatory management order requiring it to be temporarily taken over by a local hospital (Ontario, 2020ji). On November 28, the province announced two more LTC facilities would be entering voluntary, temporary management agreements with local hospitals (Ontario, 2020js). As of November 28, the MLTC had issued six mandatory management orders and facilitated another 14 voluntary management contracts between hospitals and LTC facilities across the province (ibid).

Throughout December 2020, several more LTC facilities entered into temporary management agreements with local hospitals to support their efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 and provide care to residents. Starting on December 3, the MLTC approved a temporary management order between two LTC facilities, one in Durham region and the other in York region, with two local health care organizations (Lakeridge Health and Southlake Regional Health Centre, respectively) (Ontario, 2020jx). On December 14, the MLTC issued a mandatory management order requiring a private Toronto-based LTC facility to retain a private LTC and retirement care management company as its temporary manager (Ontario, 2020ko). On December 15, one more voluntary order was approved between a local LTC facility and a hospital, followed by two more on December 16 and December 18 (Ontario, 2020kt, 2020kx, 2020lh). On December 21, a hospital in York region entered a voluntary management order with a Peel-based LTC facility (Ontario, 2020lm).

One LTC facility in Toronto has received increasing media attention for its outbreak which has been described by one physician working there as a "physician's worst nightmare" (Osorio, 2020). Tendercare Living Centre, a private, for provide LTC facility. As of December 23, the facility reported that 145 of its 188 residents had tested positive for COVID-19 since December 9, including 26 deaths (ibid).

Observers report that staff shortages have prevented basic care, infection control practices and case management, including reports of residents being weak from a lack of sufficient food and water (ibid). In response, the Ontario Medical Association issued an urgent request on December 21 for physicians to work shifts at Tendercare (ibid). Other concerns included a lack of telephone and internet access for families to contact their family members in the facility and a lack of culturally appropriate staff (ibid); Tendercare is located within a predominantly Chinese neighbourhood and many of the facility's residents are not fluent in English.

The province has yet to ask the federal government for CAF support in its LTC facilities impacted by the second wave of COVID-19. However, on December 23, the province announced that the federal government will fund Canadian Red Cross teams to support infection control and resident care in 20 LTC and retirement facilities across the province (Osorio, 2020); teams had already been deployed to 7 facilities (ibid).

3.3 Maintaining essential services

To support the continued delivery of essential health services throughout the pandemic, the province has created new care units, reinforced LTC homes with additional staff and resources, and supported the social services for all populations, including frontline workers and vulnerable populations. The following section provides further detail on the provinces key initiatives for maintaining essential services to date.

Health services and virtual care

Effective March 14, 2020, any telephone, Telehealth, or video calling platform can be used to provide virtual care in Ontario, including any provincial virtual care platform, EMR-integrated platform, Skype, FaceTime, etc. (OMA, 2020). Virtual visits are remunerated with new fee codes and can include applicable after-hours premiums (OMA, 2020). To further strengthen virtual care, a CA\$23.8 million investment was announced on March 25 through *Ontario's Action Plan 2020: Responding to COVID-19* (Ontario, 2020s).

While initial efforts focused on expanding capacity in hospitals, primary care physicians have also supported patients in the community (Bhattacharyya & Agarwal, 2020). In Ontario, primary care physicians have been involved in triaging minor acute illnesses and working with patients to manage chronic diseases and prevent exacerbations that could lead to hospitalizations (Bhattacharyya & Agarwal, 2020). In the event of a COVID-19 surge, primary care physicians prepared to respond and care for patients with severe acute illnesses and provide home-based palliative care (Bhattacharyya & Agarwal, 2020). Further, primary care providers are involved in the care of COVID-19 patients by screening patients over the phone, offering virtual visits, and guiding patient referral and testing. All primary care providers are encouraged to implement a system for virtual/telephone consultations when and where possible (MOH, 2020e). Otherwise, patients are screened over the phone before scheduling appointments or upon entry (MOH, 2020e). Provincial guidance recommends that patients who screen positive over the phone should be offered a same-day telephone consultation and/or be referred to a local COVID-19 assessment centre or ED (MOH, 2020e). Patients whose in-person assessment suggests they require a COVID-19 test may likewise be referred to those settings or, if available, be offered testing by the provider, under droplet/contact precautions (MOH, 2020e). Early in the pandemic, it was recommended that physicians call ahead to the ED/assessment centre to inform them of the patient's pending arrival (MOH, 2020e).

On August 4, the province announced it would be providing families in the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) with additional services to support their children's care, including many virtual and remote options initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario, 2020eo).

On August 18, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announced that the Ontario government would be investing CA\$3.8M to support the resumption – and catch-up – of universal hearing checks for infants (Ontario, 2020fa). Ontario's Infant Hearing Program suspended its universal newborn hearing screen, which is commonly provided pre-discharge from hospitals and in community locations, at the start of the pandemic; services began to resume in August (ibid).

On December 2, the province announced an investment of over CA\$155M, as part of its fall preparedness plan, to support 850 alternate level of care patients across the province in receiving care for their complex care needs at home (Ontario, 2020jw). The funding also supported the expansion of virtual services and home care capacity for other Ontarians (ibid).

First responders

In an effort to protect first responders during the COVID-19 pandemic, the provincial government announced an emergency order on April 6, 2020, allowing police, firefighters, and paramedics to obtain COVID-19 positive status information about individuals with whom they are coming in contact with (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2020).

On January 31, 2020, the Ministry of Health's Emergency Health Regulatory and Accountability Branch released guidance to the province's paramedic services outlining steps to reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, including pre-shift screening, on-site screening of patients, enhanced PPE and hand hygiene protocols, etc. (Ontario, 2020e). This guidance has been updated throughout the pandemic, e.g., revised screening tools (ibid).

In some regions, paramedics have also been deployed, since the start of the pandemic, to assist with in-home and mobile COVID-19 assessment and testing activities (EOHU, 2020).

At least one region is also piloting the use of rapid tests for its first responders – and frontline healthcare workers. On December 14, Muskoka Paramedic Services launched an 8-week pilot, with the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health and Public Health Ontario, using the Panbio antigen test as a screening tool to identify participants which may benefit from additional diagnostic testing (de la Vega, 2020).

Pharmaceutical services and supply

On May 13, 2020, the Ontario Drug Benefit program, which provides pharmaceutical coverage to qualifying low-income residents, waived co-payment requirements until July 1, for any prescriptions of more than 30 days (Ontario, 2020bk).

On March 21, a temporary 30-day drug supply limit measure was introduced to ensure a continued of medications throughout the pandemic (Ontario, 2020bk). On June 11, as the province began to re-open, the government announced its plan to lift the 30-day supply limit for prescription medication (Ontario, 2020cm, p. 30). This means that beginning on June 15, people can return to fulfilling orders up to 100-day supply, where necessary (Ontario, 2020cm, p. 30). It should be noted that Ontario Drug Benefit recipients' co-payments will return to their previous amounts (Ontario, 2020cm, p. 30). People are encouraged only

to fulfill prescriptions for what they need and not hoard supplies to ensure that all people are able to receive the medications they need (Ontario, 2020cm, p. 30).

Mental health and addictions services

On March 14, 2020, temporary billing codes were introduced allowing providers to bill for care provided over any virtual platform (Ministry of Health, 2020c). This included codes specific for mental health and consultation from general practitioners and psychiatrists. Further, a new initiative from the Ontario COVID-19 Mental Health Network, a group of 450 licensed psychotherapists, psychologists, and social workers in Ontario, would provide free telephone therapy sessions to health care workers on the frontlines (King, 2020).

On April 23, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) released a list of altered branch services and modes of delivery for its mental health services provided in Ontario (CMHA Ontario, 2020). The association stated that it will continue to provide services by phone or videoconferencing throughout the pandemic (CMHA Ontario, 2020).

In an effort to expand access to free virtual mental health supports, on May 5, the government expanded mental health services by offering internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) programs that were created with the help of MinBeacon and Monreau Shepell and provided to Ontarians at no cost (Ontario, 2020bf). Ontarians could self-refer to programs, available in English and French.

On September 10, the province announced CA\$14.75M in new funding to support increased access to mental health and addictions services (Ontario, 2020fv). This included CA\$7M to expand in-person services and bridge gaps brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, including supportive housing; CA\$4.75M to support culturally safe services for Indigenous communities, with a focus on children and youth; and CA\$3M to expand virtual and online services (ibid).

On October 21, the province announced a CA\$24.3M investment to hire new staff, increase access to mental health services, create new programs and activities addressing other challenges facing the mental wellbeing of children and youth in Ontario (Ontario, 2020hv). The funding came as part of the province's CA\$176M *Roadmap to Wellness* investment, a previously announced plan to build a comprehensive mental health and addictions system across the province.

On December 17, the province announced it would be providing CA\$147M, as part of its *Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19 plan*, in immediate funding to expand access to mental health and addictions supports and provide additional capacity in response to the increased needs resulting from the pandemic (Ontario, 2020la). Specifically, the new funding would support the hiring of additional staff, accommodations, virtual resources, housing and short-term accommodation, and supports for ensuring safe in-person services, where appropriate, and dedicated resources for frontline workers, including:

- Over CA\$62.2M in community-based services, with CA\$30M dedicated towards child and youth mental health services;
- CA\$8M in culturally safe services for Indigenous people, e.g. land-based programs;
- Over CA\$10M towards specific vulnerable populations, such as those at risk of homelessness and racialized persons;

- Over CA\$15.4M to expand virtual services; and
- Over CA\$51.5M towards a cross-sectoral approach supporting vulnerable populations, such as post-secondary students, First Nations communities, Metis, Inuit and urban Indigenous peoples, Black Youth, children and youth in care, LGBTQ youth, victims of gender-based violence, people with developmental disabilities, etc.

This funding builds off of prior investments (i.e., CA\$46.75M in emergency funding provided during the first wave of the pandemic), bringing the province's total pandemic response investments in mental health and addiction services to CA\$194M (Ontario, 2020la).

Services for subpopulations and long-term care settings

On April 4, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced its *COVID-19 Residential Relief Fund* for organizations that provide residential services for children and youth, people with developmental disabilities, and emergency shelters for women and families fleeing domestic violence (Ministry of Children and Family, 2020).

On April 9, the Government of Ontario further announced a partnership with SPARK, a volunteer hub, to help direct volunteers to seniors and other vulnerable residents (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, 2020b). Volunteers will help deliver food or medicines, run errands and check-up on individuals that are seeking help during COVID-19 (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, 2020b).

Outreach and volunteer services

On August 5, 2020, the provincial government announced a CA\$83M investment, through the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), which would provide grants to support non-profit organizations recover from the pandemic and continue to delivery essential services (Ontario, 2020eq). Eligible organizations, including food banks, youth programs and branches of the Royal Canadian Legion, could receive grants of up to CA\$150,000 to recover from any impacts caused from the pandemic.

On October 20, the province announced the new *Supporting Ontario's Recovery Act, 2020*. The new legislation provided liability protection for workers, volunteers, and organizations that make a honest effort at following the province's COVID-19 measures and laws, while maintaining the ability to take legal action against those who willfully or neglectfully engage the health and safety of others (Ontario, 2020hu). Specifically, the act provided protection for health care workers and institutions; frontline workers; businesses and their employees; charities, non-profit organizations; and coaches, volunteers and minor sports associations. The act was enacted on November 24, 2020.

On December 10, the province announced an investment of nearly CA\$2.9M, which would be distributed to 32 non-profit organizations delivering essential outreach services in the Ottawa region which has been affected by the pandemic, including CA\$138,000 to support the immediate needs of the Ottawa Food bank (Ontario, 2020kl). The funding, part of the CA\$83M Ontario Trillium Foundation's Resilient Communities Fund, would provide up to CA\$150,000 in grants to eligible non-profit organizations (ibid).

4. Paying for services

Adequate funding for health is important to manage the excess demands on the health system. This section considers how jurisdictions are paying for COVID-19 services. The subsection on health financing describes how much is spent on health services, where that money comes from, and the distribution of health spending across different service areas. The section also describes who is covered for COVID-19 testing and treatment, whether there are any notable gaps (in population coverage and service coverage), and how much people pay (if at all) for those services out-of-pocket.

4.1 Health financing

Health financing in Canada is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments; however, funding is providing by the federal government through a cash transfer, the *Canada Health Transfer*.

On August 19, 2020, the province announced a one-time CA\$47M mitigation fund for PHUs across the province, for the 2020 and 2021 calendar years (Ontario, 2020fb). Reportedly, the aim of this funding was to ensure PHUs, and particularly municipalities, do not experience any undue financial or public health impacts as a result of the change to the new funding model scheduled to come into effect in January 2021, which specifically outlines a 70-30 provincial-municipal cost-sharing agreement for the funding PHUs (ibid).

During the same August 19 announcement, the province announced a new CA\$77M fund to support paramedic services and dispatch centers across the province, through the Land Ambulance Services Grant (Ontario, 2020fb).

On September 25, the province announced a CA\$741M investment in reducing the backlog of essential services, caused during the earlier reduction of services, and expanding access and capacity to care (Ontario, 2020gn). This funding was a part of the province's *Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19* plan. With this announcement, the province also released *A Measured Approach to Planning for Surgeries and Procedures During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, a comprehensive framework for helping hospitals assess their readiness and plan for the resumption of scheduled surgeries and procedures, while maintaining their capacity to respond to the second wave of COVID-19 and the fall influenza season.

Since September 18, 2020, Premier Ford has publicly asked the federal government to immediately create a plan to fund provincial priorities, including enhanced ability to respond to future waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, and reduce delays in federal approval of infrastructure projects, including those in the health care and other sectors (Ontario, 2020gg). Specifically, the premier called upon the federal government to increase the Canada Health Transfer to cover at least 35% of provincial/territorial health care spending during the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The Premier further stated that this funding would be used to enhanced Ontario's fall COVID-19 preparedness plan and support activities towards ending the province's history of hallway care (ibid).

Testing and research financing

On March 17, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced a new investment of CA\$304 million to support the province's pandemic response, including CA\$50 million towards increasing screening, testing

and monitoring capacity (Ontario, 2020k). As part of the March 25 *Action Plan*, an additional CA\$160 million in new funding to support enhanced surveillance, monitoring, testing and other health services was announced (Ontario, 2020s).

On April 18, the province announced an investment of CA\$20 million towards advancing medical research towards the development of a vaccine for COVID-19, through their COVID-19 Rapid Research Fund (Ontario, 2020w). On May 21, the government announced they had funded over 15 research projects through the fund (Ontario, 2020bp). These projects center around increasing the overall understanding of COVID-19, provincial health care capacity, the use of artificial intelligence methods to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and support public health and medical interventions, and supply chain management in support of frontline health care workers (Ontario, 2020bp).

In line with its other “Made-in-Ontario” initiatives, on July 17, the Government of Ontario announced a made-in-Ontario Intellectual Property Action Plan to help ensure that taxpayer-funded research and innovation benefits the residents of Ontario; for example, by introducing a formal plan towards supporting post-secondary institutions and research institutes in strengthening their commercialization mandates (Ontario, 2020dv). With this announcement, the second round of research projects supported through the CA\$20M Ontario COVID-19 Rapid Research Fund were also announced (ibid).

On September 10, the province announced it would be investing CA\$2.9M in eight research projects aiming to support Ontario’s COVID-19 response (Ontario, 2020fu).

On September 24, the province announced a new CA\$1.07B investment in expanding Ontario’s testing and case and contact tracing management efforts (Ontario, 2020gk). To date, provincial funding had supported:

- The establishment of a provincial COVID-19 laboratory network with capacity for more than 40,000 daily tests;
- The establishment of over 150 assessment centres;
- The hiring of 1,700 new contact tracers;
- Launch of a new, custom-built case and contact management digital system to improve data quality and timeliness
- Launch of the *COVID Alert* exposure notification app; and
- A widespread public education campaign.

The new CA\$1.07B in funding supported the creation of more testing locations, including participating pharmacies (effective September 25); more testing options (e.g. saliva-based tests); enhanced testing capacity (up to 50,000 tests per day); the hiring of more contact and case managers (bringing the provincial total to over 3,750 staff); and community surveillance efforts (Ontario, 2020gk).

Medical equipment and supply financing

Provincial health care financing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic began on March 11, 2020, with a CA\$100 million COVID-19 Contingency Fund. The funding is dedicated towards buying more testing kits, PPE and hiring more health care staff. This initial investment came the same day that a CA\$1 billion federal investment was announced (Jones, 2020a).

Shortly afterwards, on March 17, the province announced an additional investment of CA\$304 million towards the province's pandemic response (Ontario, 2020k), including:

- CA\$100 million towards increasing hospital capacity;
- CA\$50 million towards protecting frontline health care workers and patients through enhanced PPE, cleaning supplies, etc.;
- CA\$25 million towards supporting frontline health care workers in assessment centres;
- CA\$50 million towards LTC homes;
- CA\$20 million towards residential facilities providing social services;
- CA\$5 million towards protecting seniors in retirement homes; and
- CA\$4 million towards supporting Indigenous communities.

On March 25, the province announced their official *Action Plan* for responding to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020s). As noted in Section 2.1, this [Action Plan](#) announced CA\$3.3 billion in additional health care resources, including a CA\$2.1 billion investment to combat the spread of COVID-19, as well as CA\$1.2 billion for the government's LTC needs (Ontario, 2020s). Key allocations of this investment included:

- A further CA\$1 billion towards the aforementioned COVID-19 Contingency Fund (Ontario, 2020s);
- CA\$935 million towards Ontario hospitals, of which CA\$594 million towards increasing capacity (Ontario, 2020s);
- CA\$341 million towards securing 1,000 new acute care beds, 500 new critical care beds and new assessment centres (Ontario, 2020s);
- CA\$75 million towards increasing the supply of PPE and medical supplies for health care workers (Ontario, 2020s);
- CA\$160 million towards COVID-19 monitoring, surveillance, and testing, as well as supporting the provision of virtual care and Telehealth Ontario (Ontario, 2020s);

Further details regarding this *Action Plan*, including recipients and sources of this funding, can be found at <https://budget.ontario.ca/2020/marchupdate/index.html>.

On April 1, the government launched a CA\$50 million Ontario Together Fund, in order to quickly develop essential supplies in response to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020ab). The government continues to accept applications from across the province through the Ontario Together portal at www.covid-19.ontario.ca from businesses that “provide innovative solutions or retool their operations in order to manufacture essential medical supplies and equipment, including gowns, coveralls, masks, face shields, testing equipment and ventilators” (Ontario, 2020ab).

On June 2, the government announced that it was continuing to support domestic manufacturers assisting with the COVID-19 pandemic, through the financing of three companies (Ontario, 2020ce). First, one local company would receive CA\$1.8 million to assist with retooling, reengineering, and purchasing new molding equipment (Ontario, 2020ce). It is estimated that with this investment the company will double its output of oxygen masks, triple its output of ETCO₂ masks, and quadruple its output of eye and face shields to meet the provincial demands (Ontario, 2020ce). Sterling Industries will receive CA\$1,023,325 which will allow it to increase face shield output from 200,000 units per week to over 1 million per week (Ontario, 2020ce). SRB Technologies will receive CA\$59,889 to convert a portion of their production to manufacture medical grade face shields which will be supplied to regional hospitals and LTC facilities (Ontario, 2020ce).

On June 15, the Ontario government announced it would be providing a CA\$526,200 subsidy to the Canadian Standards Associations (CSA), CSA Group Testing & Certification Inc., from the Ontario Together Fund, to increase their capacity for testing and certification of PPE (Ontario, 2020cr). The funding was reportedly aimed to address the province's gap in comprehensive PPE testing and certification, for which there are no domestic providers (ibid).

On July 3, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of CA\$185,425, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC), to support an Ontario natural products manufacturer in expanding its operations and meeting increased demand for products, such as hand sanitizer and soap, during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020dh). On August 6, it was announced that another CA\$1M would be delivered through NOHFC to support two Northern Ontario companies in developing new treatments, devices and technologies to support the North's health sciences sector (Ontario, 2020et).

On August 4, the province announced that CA\$2M, from the Ontario Together Fund, would be used to support a local manufacturer produce a novel sanitization device, which could be used to decontaminate N95 masks and other PPE (Ontario, 2020ep).

Workforce financing

As described above, on March 17, 2020, the provincial government announced CA\$25 million in new funding to support frontline health care staff working in COVID-19 assessment centres (Ontario, 2020k).

On April 19, the government announced they would be paying a 70% income advance to physicians, with will be based on their 12-month average (Laucius, 2020). This announcement was in response to technical difficulties with the new virtual billing codes, implemented on March 14; namely, many physicians were unable to use the codes, putting a strain on their practice (Ministry of Health, 2020c).

On April 25, the province announced an additional CA\$4 per hour wage top-up for frontline staff with an additional lump sum payment of CA\$250 for individuals working more than 100 hours a month for the following four-month period, totalling CA\$3,560 a month in additional compensation (Ontario, 2020aw). Individuals qualifying for this increased pay are those who work in LTC homes, retirement homes, emergency shelters, corrections facilities and youth justice homes, and some community and hospital staff. On April 29, the list of eligible workers for pandemic pay was expanded to also include "paramedics, respiratory therapists, public health nurses and all addictions and mental health workers" (Fox, 2020).

Health services, mental health, and virtual care financing

As part of the March 25 *Action Plan*, the province announced CA\$160 million in new funding towards supporting the provision of virtual care and Telehealth Ontario, as well as other services during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020s).

On April 2, the province dedicated CA\$14.6 million towards mental health supports amid the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ac). Of this funding, CA\$12 million will support access to online care for people seeking support, while CA\$2.6 million was for the province to hire new psychologists and other mental health workers to support Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) personnel (Ontario, 2020ac). The online mental health support funding will be specifically geared towards increasing access for everyone in Ontario, with an emphasis on ensuring care is available to frontline workers battling the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ac).

Platforms receiving this funding include BounceBack, Kids Help Phone, Internet-Based Cognitive Therapy (iCBT), iCBT for frontline health care workers and training for CBT-based interventions (Ontario, 2020ac).

On May 22, the province announced it was allocating CA\$2 million towards opening a Virtual Action Centre with the help of UNITE HERE Local 75 (Ontario, 2020bq). This action provides stress management and mental health aid and resources via video conferencing, health and safety online training for workers who return to work at designated quarantined sites, and various other skills training and preparation through video conferencing. These services target over 7,000 unemployed workers in the hotel and hospitality sector (Ontario, 2020bq). This was, reportedly, the first step in the government's plan to facilitate opening the province and prepare the tourism sector to welcome back visitors (Ontario, 2020bq).

On October 6, the province announced a CA\$19.25M investment in mental health supports targeting post-secondary students during the 2020-2021 school year, including enhanced programming and access to mental health workers on campuses (Ontario, 2020gz); the funding was delivered through the province's previous C\$3.8B 10-year mental health and addictions investment through its *Roadmap to Wellness* plan (ibid). On October 7, the province announced CA\$176M in new funding, in addition to the *Roadmap to Wellness* plan, to expand access to critical mental health and addictions services across the province (Ontario, 2020ha).

Subpopulations and Indigenous community financing

As described above, on March 17, the province announced an investment of CA\$304 million towards the province's pandemic response, which included CA\$20 million towards residential facilities providing social services; CA\$62 million for physicians in rural and remote communities as well as nurses and personal support workers in communities (Ontario, 2020s); and CA\$4 million in support for Indigenous communities (Ontario, 2020k).

On March 23, Ontario made available CA\$200 million in social services relief funding to protect the health and safety of vulnerable populations (Office of the Premier, 2020e). This funding targeted municipalities and social service providers (shelters, food banks, emergency services, charities and non-profits) delivering critical services and could be used to cover pandemic measures, such as supplies needed to support physical distancing (Office of the Premier, 2020e). The funding also supported individuals struggling to cover needs such as food, rent, medicine, and other services during this pandemic (Office of the Premier, 2020e).

On March 30, the province announced an investment of CA\$10 million towards businesses supporting seniors throughout the pandemic, including the provision of meal, medicine and necessity delivery services (Ontario, 2020y). On top of this investment, the government also announced plans with grocery stores and pharmacies to organize senior-only shopping hours and to prioritize senior deliveries in order to protect them as a vulnerable population throughout the pandemic (Ontario, 2020z). Additional support was provided by the province on April 21, through an CA\$11 million investment, to "deliver meals, medicines and other essentials to those in need" (Office of the Premier, 2020ac).

On April 7, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of CA\$37 million to support outbreak planning and prevention efforts for Indigenous communities (Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, 2020).

On June 4, the Office of the Premier announced CA\$1.5 million in financing for Black communities, as a vulnerable population throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, who are disproportionately affected (Ontario, 2020ch). The funding will go towards organizations that support Black families and youth through the provision of urgent COVID-19 supports (Ontario, 2020ch).

On June 18, the government announced a CA\$25 million investment towards mental health and technology services for students (Ontario, 2020ct). Of this funding, CA\$10 million will be allocated towards providing direct access to regulated mental health professionals and reduce overall waiting times for appointments and sessions (Ontario, 2020ct). This funding is also in addition to an existing CA\$25 million investment aimed at hiring 180 permanent front-line health workers in secondary schools (Ontario, 2020ct).

On November 17, the province announced an investment of over CA\$37M, through its *Roadmap to Wellness Plan*, to expand mental health services across the justice system, including additional mobile crisis services, safe bed programs for those in mental health or addictions crises, supportive housing for individuals involved with the criminal justice system, the hiring of additional staff, and tailored programs for First Nations communities (Ontario, 2020iw).

Long-term care financing

As described above, on March 17, the provincial provided CA\$50 million towards supporting LTC homes and CA\$5 million towards retirement homes.

The March 25 *Action Plan* provided CA\$120 million towards increasing home and community care, and CA\$243 million towards supporting LTC homes (Ontario, 2020f).

On October 30, the province announced a CA\$5M investment to launch the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program, a new program that would be piloted in five communities across the province which would allow seniors on LTC waitlists to stay safe at home while they wait to be transferred to a LTC facility (Ontario, 2020if). The program will include, for example, enhanced virtual supports, home visits and ongoing monitoring by paramedicine practitioners. On November 27, the province announced it was investing an addition CA\$15M into this program (Ontario, 2020jq).

Essential services

The March 25 *Action Plan* provided CA\$35 million to support the continued supply of vital blood products and support for Canadian Blood Services (Ontario, 2020s).

4.2 Entitlement and coverage

Coverage for provincial health care

Residents of Ontario are eligible for the province's publicly funded, universal health insurance program, the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), which covers a range of in-hospital and primary care services and procedures. Specifically, this applies to all Canadian citizens, permanent residents, landed immigrants and registered persons included in the Indian Act for whom Ontario is the place of their primary residence; certain eligible "protected persons", i.e., refugees; and certain eligible foreign workers and Temporary Residents and their spouses and/or dependents (MLTC, n.d.). Additional services and procedures, such as

dental care and pharmaceutical benefits, are covered for eligible residents, e.g., low-income residents and those with high medical costs relative to income (ibid).

Previously, any person residing in Ontario for three months or more was eligible for OHIP insurance (Ontario, 2020ad). On March 20, in response to the pandemic, the Government of Ontario waived its three-month wait period for newcomers to access provincial health insurance. The province also extended coverage for COVID-19 related screening, testing, and treatment to individuals who do not qualify for OHIP in an effort to encourage anyone who may be affected to seek care and thus better control spread. Individuals whose health card is expiring or already expired will continue to benefit from provincial health coverage during the pandemic (ibid).

Coverage for COVID-19 testing

Currently, all individuals living in Ontario are eligible to receive a diagnostic test and assessment for COVID-19 free-of-charge if they meet the province's testing eligibility criteria; i.e., OHIP enrollment is not a requirement (MOH, 2020f).

5. Governance

The governance of the health system with regard to COVID-19 relates to pandemic response plans and the steering of the health system to ensure its continued functioning. It includes emergency response mechanisms, as well as how information is being communicated, and the regulation of health service provision to patients affected by the virus.

5.1 Ontario's pandemic response plan

In Ontario, the overarching legislation supporting the province's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. This Act was first developed in 1990 for pandemic preparedness and was most recently updated in June 2019, prior to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2019). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several orders were made by the provincial government under this act. Additionally, the province has established a [Command Table](#), several targeted response teams and tables (Figure 1) and has enacted several legislative changes in their response to COVID-19. The province also has an arms-length scientific advisory table, the [Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table](#).

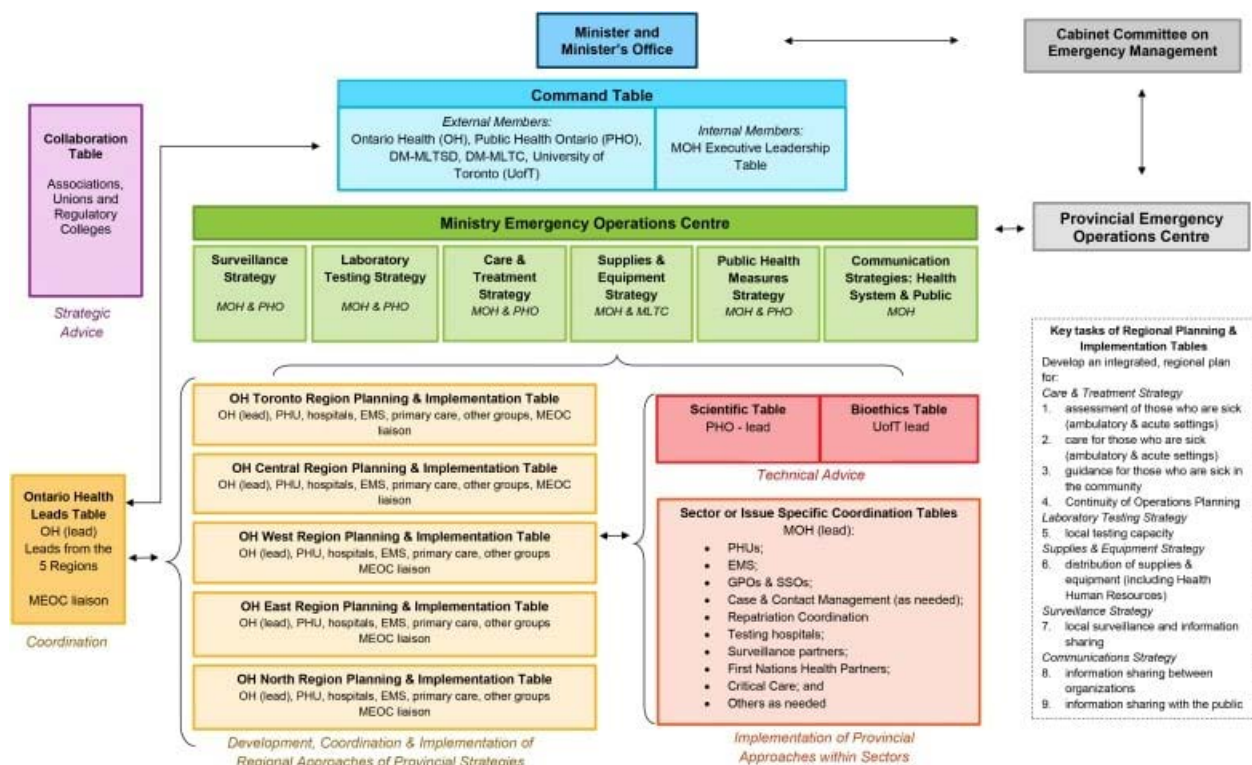


Figure 1. Ontario COVID-19 Response Organization Chart, June 2020

Image taken from the Government of Ontario's website, original link no longer available (Gatehouse, 2020)

The following is a brief summary of the key roles and responsibilities of the provincial and municipal governments as outlined in the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, and Ontario's additional governance efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provincial Government

When responding to a pandemic, the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)* allows the provincial government to close any public or private place, restrict travel, and procure necessary goods and services (Ontario, 2019). This act was triggered on March 17, 2020, when the provincial government declared a state of emergency (Ontario, 2020k). The EMCPA requires that each municipality, ministry, agency and other branches of government develop, implement and maintain an emergency management program, which are to be implemented once a state of emergency is declared (Ontario, 2019).

On March 2, Ontario announced the formation of a provincial Command Table, described as a group of executive leaders and public health experts (Ontario, 2020h). This decision-making and rapid response group is responsible for oversight of the province's COVID-19 response and is composed of senior leadership in governance and health care, including the Minister of Health and CMOH (MLTC, 2020a). The Command Table works closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the federal public health body. Additionally, the Collaboration Table is a broader group of stakeholders advising the response, including representatives from LTC facilities (MLTC, 2020a).

On April 15, in response to the number of outbreaks in LTC homes, the province announced the establishment of a 24/7 LTC COVID-19 Response Team, which governs the responses of LTC homes experiencing outbreaks (Ontario, 2020ao). For instance, this response team advises on infection protocols that should be put into place and helps to resolve staffing and PPE procurement issues so that LTC homes can curb their outbreaks (Ontario, 2020av). The Response Team also implements the *COVID-19 Action Plan: Long-Term Care Homes*, a three-point plan outlining (1) aggressive testing, screening and surveillance of individuals and staff members in LTC homes experiencing outbreaks, even if asymptomatic; (2) managing outbreaks with public health and infection control expertise and additional staff; and (3) redeploying staff from hospitals to LTC homes to respond to outbreaks and increasing recruitment activities (Ontario, 2020ao).

Further changes to the EMCPA were announced on April 17 to restrict employees working in LTC homes to working in one home setting at a time, providing local health integration networks (LHINs) the ability to reassign staff where they are most needed (including LTC homes and community settings) and provide municipalities the ability to similarly reassign staff, including child-care, bylaw enforcement and public health services (Ontario, 2020aj). The act stipulates that those who give up employment in other settings as a result of this mandate will be protected from losing their jobs once the state of emergency passes (Ontario, 2020ao). On May 12, the MLTC issued an order permitting the reassignment of management in LTC homes where “at least one resident or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19” (Ontario, 2020br). Subsequently, on May 25, the MLTC issued two mandatory management orders in the province that appointed two hospitals, Southlake Regional Health Centre and Humber River Hospital, to temporarily manage two LTC homes, River Glen Haven Nursing Home and Downsview LTC, respectively, for at least 90 days (Ontario, 2020br). This came in response to uncontrolled outbreaks of COVID-19 in these homes, suggesting current management were unable to effectively manage the spread of COVID-19 in their homes, and the need for more rigorous management structures to be implemented to contain the virus (Ontario, 2020br). On May 28, the government also announced an indefinite extension of the Incident Management System (IMS) LTC table, consisting of health care professionals, which was established in April to make rapid decisions to meet LTC needs amid the pandemic (Ontario, 2020bv). The IMS table meets daily and coordinates LTC efforts of multiple providers and municipalities across the province; thereby, enabling the province to respond to urgent issues and immediately redeploy resources across the system (Ontario, 2020bv).

The Ontario Government have made additional legislative changes pertaining to education and police services in response to COVID-19. The following legislative amendments were all announced on April 14 (Ontario, 2020an):

- the *Education Act*, to ensure a consistent approach to suspensions and expulsions of students as expulsion hearings are no longer feasible;
- the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* to allow for a 6-month suspension of student loan payments, providing financial relief to students;
- the *Planning Act*, to allow municipalities to temporarily put some planning on hold to better focus on the COVID-19 crisis;
- the *Development Charges Act* to allow municipalities to continue to use expired by-laws for 6 months and, thus, continue collecting revenue for growth; and

- the *Police Services Act*, to give municipalities an extension on developing plans for community safety and wellbeing (Ontario, 2020an).

On April 23, Ontario announced the *COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People*, to further protect individuals living in high-risk settings, such as homes for individuals with developmental disabilities, shelters for gender-based violence survivors, children's and Indigenous peoples' residences (Office of the Premier, 2020b). The plan has three parts: (1) enhanced screening of visitors, staff, and residents, providing staff with masks and reducing visitors in an effort to reduce spread; (2) enhancing testing of symptomatic staff and clients, restricting staff to working at just one location, and providing staff with additional training to limit spread; and (3) working with organizations to hire more staff and manage staff shortages (Office of the Premier, 2020b).

Provincial laboratories carry out testing of suspected COVID-19 cases according to guidelines set by the Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network (i.e., *Protocol for Microbiological Investigations of Severe Acute Respiratory Infections* [SARI]) (PHAC, 2020b). In Ontario, the provincial laboratory is PHOL; PHO is an arms-length, non-governmental agency responsible for providing scientific and technical advice towards public health efforts in Ontario, such as activities performed by PHUs (PHAC, 2020b).

On May 27, the province announced the extension of several emergency orders under the EMCPA until June 9 (Ontario, 2020bu). These orders included "the closure of outdoor playgrounds, play structures and equipment, public swimming pools and outdoor water facilities, as well as bars and restaurants except for takeout and delivery" (Ontario, 2020bu). Furthermore, following a spike in cases as the province began re-opening, the Government of Ontario extended the five-person limit for social gatherings until further notice (Ontario, 2020bu). The rules regarding the redeployment of staff to LTC homes, retirement homes and women's shelters are also to remain in place until further notice (Ontario, 2020bu).

On June 4, the Office of the Premier announced the new Council on Equality of Opportunity (Ontario, 2020ch). This council is intended to advise young people on how to overcome social and economic barriers, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario, 2020ch). The council consists of 20 members including youth (18 to 29 years of age), adults with specialized knowledge, business representatives, educational representatives and government service members (Ontario, 2020ch).

On July 7, the Government of Ontario introduced new legislation aimed at protecting public health in a flexible manner as the economy re-opened (Ontario, 2020dm). *The Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act (ROA)*, 2020 would ensure important public health measures remain in place to address COVID-19 once the provincial state of emergency ends, specifically:

- the new act would continue emergency orders under the EMCPA for an initial 30 days;
- allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to further extend these orders for up to 30 days at a time, as required by the epidemiology of COVID-19;
- allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to amend specific emergency orders under the EMCPA, such as labour redeployment, closure of places and spaces, regulation of how businesses and establishments can remain open, compliance with public health guidelines (and associated penalties), and restrictions on gatherings and organized public events;
- prevent new emergency orders from being created; and
- allow emergency orders to be rescinded, once safe to do so.

The Act came into effect on July 24, 2020, to coincide with the then-planned ending of the provincial state of emergency (Ontario, 2020dy); however, the last state of emergency was extended through July 29, 2020. Under the ROA, orders can be renewed for 30 days at a time.

On August 26, Ontario's Chief Coroner (Dr. Dirk Huyer) was appointed to take on the lead position, Coordinator, of the Provincial Outbreak Response table (Ontario, 2020fk). In May 2020, he was previously appointed as the Executive Lead for the COVID-19 Testing Approach at the Command Table (ibid). This appointment is one of many that has been questioned by public health experts and the public, including other's outlined in the Ontario Auditor General's COVID-19 Preparedness and Management Special Report (Ontario Auditor General, 2020); Dr. Huyer is a coroner and professor of pediatrics with no notably public health or infectious disease expertise.

On September 9, the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec concluded the first Ontario-Quebec Summit, where they discussed ways that their neighbouring provincial governments could collaborate and support their accelerated economic recovery and preparedness of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario, 2020ft). One aspect of this agreement was lesson learning from their experiences with the first wave of COVID-19 and how to better prepare for the second wave. The two premiers also called upon the federal government to provide additional financial support through the Canada Health Transfer.

On October 8, the province announced that the Minister of Education would be provided an Education Health Advisor: Dr. Joshua Tepper, former President of North York General Hospital, Vice-President of Education at Sunnybrook Health Center and long-standing senior civil servant within the MOH (Ontario, 2020hd). Dr Tepper, a respected leader within Ontario health care system, would support Minister Lecce, in collaboration with Dr. Huyer and CMOH Dr. Williams, would support ongoing adherence to the province's school reopening plans.

Despite many signs suggesting a lack of support among public health and medical experts, including a scathing report from Ontario's Auditor General outlining the province's failed and slow responses throughout the pandemic, Dr. Williams was reappointed as CMOH on November 23, for the period of February 16, 2021 through September 1, 2021 (Ontario, 2020je; Ontario Auditor General, 2020).

Municipal Government

Under the EMCPA, municipal responsibilities during a state of emergency include:

- Implementing their own, previously developed emergency management programs, including: (1) an emergency plan; (2) training programs and exercises for municipality employees and other persons necessary for the provision of services in the response; and (3) public education regarding public safety and preparedness, and other detail elements;
- Identifying and assessing hazards and risks to the public that could either give rise to emergencies or are at risk to being affected by emergencies;
- Coordinating with other municipalities to assist each other in the formulation of their emergency plans;
- Municipalities must review and revise their emergency plan annually (Ontario, 2019).

Under the EMCPA, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may also designate a specific municipality, if necessary, in addressing a specific type of emergency (Ontario, 2019). Additionally, municipalities are also permitted to issue their own emergency orders and bylaws in response to emergencies, such as COVID-

19. For instance, the City of Toronto has enacted two emergency orders that regulate physical distancing in public parks and squares, with fines for violations (Toronto, 2020a)

Ontario has PHUs across the province, which are official health agencies, established by single or groups of municipalities to provide local public health support (Ontario, n.d.-a). Key responsibilities of PHUs in Ontario throughout the COVID-19 pandemic include leading local contact tracing initiatives, managing cases and their contacts, declaring local outbreaks and helping manage them, and working closely with local, regional and provincial partners (Ontario, 2020ap). PHUs also develop and disseminate public health informational materials to residents and businesses. Each PHU is overseen by a Medical Officer Health, who has legal authority for issuing local public health measures and orders (Ontario, 2020ap).

Ontario also has 14 LHINs, overseen by a CEO; LHINs are responsible for the integration and coordination of health care services across the province (Ontario, n.d.-b). Notably, several PHUs may belong to a several LHIN and the geographic boundaries of these regions may differ (Ontario, n.d.-b).

Moreover, Ontario was in the process of undertaking major revisions to its public health system organizations prior to the pandemic, which included the creation a new health care organization, Ontario Health, which will amalgamate 20 existing health agencies (Ontario Health, n.d.). A part of this new institutional organization was the creation of Ontario Health Teams across the province, which would be tasked with the coordination of patient care. In December 2019, CA\$25.25M was provided by the province to support the creation of 24 Teams. On July 23, it was announced that five more teams had been approved; on July 28, another new team was announced (Ontario, 2020eg). On July 23, it was also announced that CA\$9.5M of the team's funding would be dedicated to virtual care and CA\$375,000 per team for expanding digital care and dedicated human resources to collaboratively respond to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020ea). On November 18, an additional 13 new teams were announced (Ontario, 2020iy).

On July 27, a historic CA\$4B investment from the federal and provincial governments was announced, which would provide a one-time financial assistance to Ontario's 444 municipalities and local transit systems, which had been financially hard hit as a result of reduced ridership throughout the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ed). The agreement included CA\$777M in federal funding and CA\$1.22B in provincial funding to support municipal budget shortfalls incurred during the pandemic. The first phase of the funding was administered during the fall of 2020 (ibid).

Audit of Ontario's Pandemic Response

On November 25, Ontario's Auditor General released the first audit of Ontario's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on three areas: emergency management and pandemic response; outbreak planning and decision-making; and laboratory testing, case management and contact tracing (Ontario Auditor General, 2020). The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) is currently working on its second special report focusing on Ontario's management of health-related COVID-19 expenditures, PPE, and LTC during the pandemic.

In the report, the OAG outlines several contributing factors leading to Ontario's slower pandemic response, relative to comparative provinces (e.g., British Columbia) and jurisdictions (e.g., Victoria, Australia). These included outdated emergency and pandemic response plans; inadequate public health and health care staffing, and significant changeover in leadership at Ontario's Provincial Emergency Management Office (EMO) and PHO; and systemic issues, such as the lack of laboratory surge capacity

and outdated information systems (Ontario Auditor General, 2020). Notably, a number of these threats to Ontario's pandemic and emergency response were highlighted in previous reports and recommendations, particularly those following Toronto's experiences with SARS in 2003 and, more broadly, with the H1N1 influenza in 2009 (PHAC, 2004).

According to the report, the province paid a consulting company CA\$1.6M to develop an organizational command structure for its COVID-19 response (Ontario Auditor General, 2020); the OAG also suggested that Ontario's command structure was too cumbersome, including nearly 500 people at the time the report was released, and, most notably, the was not led by public health or medical experts. For example, the province's Central Co-ordination Table was co-chaired by two politicians, without content expertise, and included 14 other politicians; neither the CMOH nor anybody from PHO sat on the table (ibid).

A recent article by the National Post, one of Canada's leading newspaper organization, further outlined what it called a "mass exodus" of top officials from PHO, including six leadership position that were eliminated between June 2019 and January 2020, as well as substantial budget cuts, funding freezes and organizational restructuring in recent years (Warnica, 2020b). Specifically, it suggests that a number of senior leaders at PHO were forced out of their roles, many not being replaced due to budget and other constraints (ibid). Multiple senior officials were quoted, suggesting these changes left Ontario with a lack of leadership, expertise and experience needed to successfully respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid).

On December 9, it was announced that Dr. Deeks would be leaving her role for a new job in Nova Scotia; it is not clear if this career change was planned prior to November events (Yang, 2020b). Dr. Deeks was the so-called PHO whistleblower who spoke out against the province rejecting its own experts' advice on its color-coded framework (see Section 5.3) (Yang & Allen, 2020). Notably, Dr. Deeks was the second top-ranking official to leave PHO since the start of the pandemic; PHO's former President and CEO, Dr. Donnelly, took a temporary leave in April and permanently left his position in July (Freeman, 2020). Further, PHO has yet to replace its acting President and CEO, who is a health management executive without medical or public health training (PHO, 2020a).

The OAG also noted that the Ontario's response was often disorganized and inconsistent due to differences in management across the 34 PHUs; this was an area of reform highlighted following the SARS epidemic in 2003 (Ontario Auditor General, 2020). In May 2020, all 34 PHU jointly issued a statement calling for more direction and regional consistency; since January 23, PHUs have held weekly meetings and since February 11, these have occurred twice weekly (ibid). At the time of the OAG report, best practices were still not being shared across PHUs, despite these opportunities for information sharing (ibid). For example, one PHU – Kingston Public Health Unit – acted earlier, with particular focus on the early promotion of infection prevention and control measures in LTC facilities; at the time of the OAG report, this PHU had only reported one case of COVID-19 in any of its LTC facilities and it was among a staff member (ibid). Had other PHUs been able to quickly learn from this exemplar, they might have taken similar actions.

As also repeatedly raised in the media, the OAG was concerned that Ontario's laboratory testing, case management and contact tracing capacity were still inadequate to contain the spread of COVID-19, which would become an increasing challenge during the second wave (Ontario Auditor General, 2020). The OAG also highlighted that clear guidelines and targets were lacking for these activities. For example, between

January and August 2020, only one PHU met the province's target of reporting at least 60% of laboratory test results within a day of specimens being collected (ibid). During September and October of 2020, only 75% of people testing positive for COVID-19 in Ontario were notified within 24 hours of their result being received; case management was also delayed, taking 4.5 days on average during these months to begin in Ottawa and 4 days in Toronto, for example (ibid).

5.2 Ontario's Framework for Reopening

On April 27, the province released its *Framework for Reopening our Province*, a plan for easing COVID-19 restrictions (Ontario, 2020ax). The plan rests on the following principles: responsible, evidence-informed, resourced, monitored, responsive and effective, and clear (Ontario, 2020ax) and includes the following three stages.

Stage 1: 'Protect and Support'

Stage 1 describes the emergency actions and limits put in place to mitigate and contain the effects of the virus, and support Ontarians financially during this time, reflecting much of the actions described in this section thus far. In this first stage, the province will consider reopening select businesses that can be immediately modified to meet public health recommendations like curbside pickup, allowing for gatherings of a few more people in public events, such as funerals, the provision of some non-urgent and scheduled surgeries at hospitals, and continued physical distancing and hygiene at all times (Ontario, 2020ax).

On May 7, while planning to resume to some non-urgent surgeries and procedures, the government issued a reminder that hospitals must take the appropriate measures to ensure the safety of their patients while maintaining their capacity for COVID-19 cases; these measures can be found in *A Measured Approach to Planning for Surgeries and Procedures During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Ontario, 2020bg). This framework also outlines specific criteria hospitals must meet before scheduled surgeries can resume. Each hospital can determine their own plan for reopening and is not required to do so by a specific date. Criteria for prioritizing surgeries are also specified in the framework (Ontario, 2020bg).

On May 14, the province announced two additional waves of reopening, set for May 16 and May 19 (Ontario, 2020bm). Key May 16 openings included golf courses, marinas, private parks and campgrounds for preparation, and business that board animals such as stables, with certain restrictions in place; e.g. to maintain physical distancing (Ontario, 2020bm). Key May 19 openings included street-front retail services, seasonal businesses such as garden centers, animal services, household services and certain medical services such as non-emergency diagnostic imaging and surgeries, also with certain restrictions in place (Ontario, 2020bm).

On June 1, the province re-opened provincial parks, backcountry camping and Crown Land camping (Ontario, 2020bx).

Stage 2: 'Restart'

Stage 2 outlines a step-by-step approach to loosening emergency measures, on a regional (i.e., PHU) basis. The province stated that it aimed to balance public health and workplace safety, while also taking into account the needs of people and businesses (Ontario, 2020ax). In this phase, the province considered the re-opening of additional office, retail and service industries, and more outdoor spaces to allow larger

public health gatherings, while still maintaining rigorous IPAC and distancing measures (Ontario, 2020ax). Stage 2 includes three stages, each of which will be monitored at two-to-four week intervals by public health officials to determine whether to stay in the current stage, proceed to the next one, or backtrack to a previous stage, if needed (Ontario, 2020ax).

Throughout these stages, LTC facilities and vulnerable populations continued to be the focus of the province's virus-mitigation efforts (Ontario, 2020ax). While provincial authorities stated that they recognize the importance of re-opening schools, it did not give any indication of when or how this would happen until later in the summer (Ontario, 2020ax). On April 26, the province announced that schools will remain closed until at least May 31 and, on May 19, it was announced that schools would remain closed through the end of June (Ministry of Education, 2020d; Ontario, 2020bn). During their May 19 announcement, the province also stated that it was working on plans for the gradual re-opening of child care and summer camps (Ontario, 2020bn). On April 25, the province set May 31 for the re-opening of provincial parks (Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, 2020). On May 19, the province announced the gradual reopening of daycares for non-essential workers and day camps are also expected to occur in Stage 2 (Ontario, 2020bn).

On June 8, the province announced they would be moving forward with a regional approach in Stage 2, which is set to begin on June 12. This meant that some areas throughout the province were permitted to re-open sooner than others and the decision of which regions would re-open at each stage was reportedly based on rates of transmission, hospital capacity and testing progress. A complete list of the 24 regions permitted to proceed to Stage 2 on June 12 can be found on the [Ontario Reopening](#) website. On June 19, an additional 6 regions were permitted to enter into Stage 2 (Ontario, 2020cq). The three remaining regions in the province, Peel Public Health, Toronto Public Health and Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, moved to Stage 2 on June 24 (Peel and Toronto) and June 25 (Windsor-Essex) (Ontario, 2020cq). Due to ongoing outbreaks in their local agricultural and agri-food sector, the Windsor-Essex municipality of Leamington and Township of Kingsville moved to Stage 2 on July 7 (*ibid*).

Under Stage 2, the following activities and establishments were permitted to re-open and/or resume:

- beaches at Ontario Parks (Ontario, 2020ci);
- outdoor dining in bars, restaurants and other establishments (Ontario, 2020ci);
- certain personal care services such as tattoo parlours, barber shops, hair salons and beauty salons (Ontario, 2020ci);
- shopping malls, where food services will only be available for take-out or outdoor dining (Ontario, 2020ci);
- tour guide services such as biking, walking, bus, and boat tours, as well as food-centered tours such as tasting, winery, brewery and distillery tours (Ontario, 2020ci);
- recreational water facilities such as swimming pools, outdoor splash pads and wading pools (Ontario, 2020ci);
- private campgrounds (Ontario, 2020ci);
- outdoor recreational facilities such as outdoor team sports (Ontario, 2020ci);
- drive-in and drive-through entertainment such as theatres, concerts, animal attractions and cultural installations (Ontario, 2020ci);
- certain film and television production facilities (Ontario, 2020ci);

- weddings and funerals, limited to a 30% indoor capacity or a 50 people outdoor capacity (Ontario, 2020cp).

Additional re-openings in the following weeks included:

- June 15: camping for enrolled campers through the Ontario Parks' Seasonal Campsite Program (Ontario, 2020ck);
- June 22: remaining campgrounds and roofed accommodations (Ontario, 2020ck).

As of June 9, child care centres across the province were permitted to re-open, given that they meet the province's strict guidelines, which included minimizing groups of children and staff to 10 or less, creating a plan in case of exposure to COVID-19 among any staff or child, implementing a screening process, keeping attendance records, enhancing cleanings, restricting visitors and facilitating physical distancing during pick-up and drop-off of children (Ontario, 2020cj).

On June 16, the province released workplace safety guidelines for businesses re-opening in Stage 2 in order to support their own development of workplace safety plans (Ontario, 2020cs). These guidelines include information on using face coverings in the workplace, developing unique safety measures and controls for the workplace, and clarifies the need for PPE in certain workplaces (Ontario, 2020cs).

On June 19, the Government of Ontario released its back-to-school safety plan, which outlined scenarios for how teachers, staff, and students could safely return to schools in September 2020 (Ontario, 2020cx). While decision-makers had not yet decided exactly what the 2020-2021 school year would look like, they reassured Ontarians that the decision to return to in-person classes will be based on medical advice, and boards and schools were asked to plan for alternative scenarios, including online, standard in-person (with enhanced public health measures), modified in-person (e.g., modified timetables and smaller class sizes), and mixed delivery modes of instruction. Officials stated that the plan was developed with extensive consultation with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health; health experts from the province's COVID-19 Command Table; medical experts from The Hospital for Sick Children, Canada's leading children's hospital; education sector partners; and frontline workers, parents and students. School boards were tasked with preparing their own safety plans, using the elements of the provincial safety plan as a foundational starting point, and were asked to submit these plans to the ministry of Education by August 4, 2020. The Ministry of Education also provided school boards with the opportunity to receive formalized feedback on their draft plans from medical experts. Further, the Ministry of education stated that school boards would be responsible for communicating their finalized plans to parents and students prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year in September 2020 (ibid).

Starting July 6, courtrooms across the province began resuming in-person proceedings, with strict health and safety protocols in place (Ontario, 2020dd). With this announcement, the government also stated that it was consulting with justice sector partners, leaders and innovators to identify investment priorities supporting innovative means of delivering and increasing access to justice services for the entire province, including rural and remote communities. Since March 16, the Superior and Ontario Courts of Justice has limited in-person proceedings to urgent matters (e.g., restraining orders) and had held over 21,000 remote proceedings, e.g., via telephone, video, and teleconference (ibid).

Throughout the summer, most PHUs also introduced mandatory face covering policies for indoor public spaces, excluding children under two years of age and individuals with certain medical conditions. The

first such order was introduced by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health on June 12, 2020 (Guelph, 2020). Throughout the summer, the CMOH stated that a province-wide face covering policy would not be implemented and he would leave it to local authorities to implement any such policies in their regions (CBC News & 2020, 2020). However, a province-wide policy came into effect on October 2, 2020, which mandated the use of face coverings in all public indoor settings for persons two years of age and older, excluding those with certain medical conditions (Ontario, 2020gv).

Stage 3: ‘Recover’

Stage 3 describes Ontario’s “new normal” during the pandemic. The province states that the aims during Stage 3 are to create jobs and help the economy recover (Ontario, 2020ax). During this phase, the province has re-opened nearly all workplaces, further relaxed public gathering guidelines (to a maximum of 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors, subject to physical distancing requirements), and continued to work towards mitigating health risks for vulnerable populations (Ontario, 2020ax). The province has stated that large public gatherings, like concerts and sporting events, will continue to be prohibited for the foreseeable future; e.g. until a vaccine becomes available (Ontario, 2020ax). Businesses prohibited from re-opening during Stage 3, due to the likelihood of crowd congregating, difficulties in maintaining physical distance, and challenges regarding sanitation measures, included amusement parks, buffets, dancing at bars (excluding hired performers), overnight camps, private karaoke rooms, high-contact sports, saunas and similar spa-type rooms (e.g., steam rooms), and table games at gaming establishments, such as casinos (ibid).

As with the move into Stage 2, decisions regarding which regions will enter Stage 3, and when, was reportedly made in consultation with the CMOH and other health experts and based on key public health indicators for each PHU (ibid). Specifically, at the beginning of each week, the province stated it would reassess local trends in transmission, hospital capacity, and testing and contact tracing to determine if PHUs could progress to Stage 3.

The first set of 22 regions moved to Stage 3 on July 17, followed by seven more PHUs on July 24 (Ontario, 2020ax). Toronto and Peel regions moved to Stage 3 on July 31; similar to the move to Stage 2, Windsor Essex was not permitted to move to Stage 3 until later than other regions in the province (August 12) given the ongoing outbreaks across their agri-food sectors (ibid).

On June 22, Ontario driving test centers began resuming driver examination services across the province (Ontario, 2020el). Services were reintroduced in three phases with strict public health measures in place. Notably, to prepare for the large influx in demand for in-person driver’s test services – which had been cancelled in March, a series of service dates were introduced throughout August, determined according to customer’s birthdate. To reduce the demand for in-person services, many ServiceOntario services, including driver’s license and health card renewals, continue to be delivered online and expired products have been extended through the pandemic. Despite these measures, Ontarians continue to face considerable wait times for services – given the backlog created by the spring closures; on November 27, the province announced it would begin offering online appointment bookings at 42 of its busiest ServiceOntario locations for services needing to be completed in-person (Ontario, 2020jr).

To support the safe reopening of restaurants during Stage 3, on July 31, the province introduced new measures for bars, restaurants, and other food and drink establishments (Ontario, 2020em). These

included, for example, that all patrons remain seated, in both indoors and outdoors settings, and establishments keep a log containing the contact details for all patrons for a minimum of 30 days, to support contact tracing efforts.

On July 30, the provincial government released its plan for the safe reopening of child care centers and public schools in September 2020. Specifically, licensed child care centres would be permitted to operate at full capacity beginning September 1, 2020, with enhanced public health measures in place, including (Ontario, 2020ei):

- All child care staff wear face masks at all times;
- Frequent cleaning of child care centres and hand hygiene measures;
- Screening of children and staff;
- Maintaining attendance records to support contact tracing efforts; and
- The establishment of clear case management protocols.

Further, elementary schools would be permitted to re-open provincewide, with in-person instruction five days a week; most secondary schools would start the school year in an adapted model of part-time in-person attendance with class cohorts of up to 15 students, alternating between attending in-person and online learning; and secondary schools in lower risk areas would be permitted to re-open with a normal daily schedule, five days a week (Ontario, 2020ej). Students from Grade 4-12, approximately 10 years of age and older, and school staff are required to wear face masks during in-person activities; face masks are optional for younger students. Other specific measures are outlined in the province's 22-page technical document (ibid).

Notably, outdoor playgrounds and parks across the province were not permitted to re-open until Stage 3, a decision which perplexed many medical, public health and pediatric experts given the low transmission risk associated with outdoors activities and, particularly, given the lower transmission rates observed among young children (Troster, 2020).

Before progressing to the next stage (including the first one), the province states that the following will be considered by public health officials and the provincial government: viral spread and containment (i.e., a consistent 2-4 week decrease in the number of new cases, number of infections that cannot be traced back to a specific source, and number of cases in hospitals), health system capacity (i.e., sufficient acute and critical care capacity, including ventilators, and the ongoing availability of PPE), public health system capacity (i.e. contact tracing efforts are able to identify 90% of contacts within 24 hours of the case report), and "incidence tracking capacity" (i.e., sufficient testing and contact tracing efforts) (Ontario, 2020ax). The province is, therefore, implicitly using provincial epidemiological data, public health data and health system capacity data to inform re-opening decisions, as well as modelling projections, which have informed their decisions thus far. The provincial exit plan did not explicitly mention the use of advice or strategies from other provinces, countries or international organizations; however, the plan states it is working closely with the Federal government to foster collaboration and a synchronous approach to easing restrictions across the country (Ontario, 2020ax).

Table 1. Overview of key re-openings

Category	Dates and relevant notes
Schools (e.g. primary, higher education, etc.)	Beginning in July, some post-secondary institutions were permitted to host some in-person classes, e.g. for individuals who were unable to complete their studies due to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020cl). In September, all educational institutions resumed, either through virtual, in-person or hybrids formats; some schools, such as those in the Ottawa region, opened in late August (Ontario, 2020cl).
Workers (e.g. essential workers, child care workers, etc.)	Essential workers have been permitted to work in-person through the pandemic; other workers have been encouraged to work from home as much as possible. Re-opening of specific non-essential sectors occurred according to the province's staged approach, with most re-opening under Stage 2 (June 12, 2020)
Businesses (e.g. SMEs, restaurants, etc.)	Most businesses were permitted to reopen as of June 12, as part of Stage 2; however, these dates varied by PHU and sector. See above for more detail.
Travel (local, cross-border, etc.)	No specific dates for the re-opening of the US-Canada border restrictions provided yet; however, US residents have been permitted to visit family members since October 2 (Canada, 2020b). International students have also been permitted to enter the country for the fall and winter semesters, if attending eligible in-person education institutions (ibid).
Gatherings (events, informal gatherings, religious services, etc.)	Gatherings are permitted to increase to 10 people in Stage 2, as of June 12, in certain regions (Ontario, 2020cp). Gatherings for funerals and weddings are permitted to increase as well, with an indoors limit of 30% capacity, and an outdoor limit of 50 attendees (Ontario, 2020cp).
Outdoor facilities and recreation	Camping for enrolled campers through the Ontario Parks' Seasonal Campsite Program are reopening on June 15, with the remaining campgrounds and roofed accommodations reopening on June 22 (Ontario, 2020ck).

To support planning for re-opening, on April 28, the province announced the [COVID-19: Tackling the Barriers website](#), where businesses could submit proposals to rework their operations to produce health-related products or plans to continue operations during physical distancing measures (Ontario, 2020ay). This will help the provincial government remove barriers that may be negatively hindering Ontario's supply chain. On April 30, the province released workplace safety guidelines for workers in manufacturing, food and restaurants and agriculture (Ontario, 2020bb). These guidelines describe ways to ensure appropriate physical distancing, as described in Section 3.2. The province has also hired 58 new labor inspectors to help ensure these new measures are implemented as businesses reopen (Office of the Premier, 2020c).

5.3 Ontario's Framework for Re-closing

While details began to be shared as early as September 22, on September 30, the province officially introduced its fall preparedness plan, *Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19*, which aimed to support key sectors across the province (health care, LTC and education) quickly identify and respond to surges and outbreaks during the second wave of COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020gr).

Modified Stage 2

On October 9, the province introduced a new re-closing strategy, called modified Stage 2, which entailed the following measures: reducing gathering sizes to a maximum of 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors; prohibiting indoor services at restaurants, bars, and other food and drink establishments; the closing of indoor gyms and fitness centers, casinos and other gaming establishments; indoor cinemas and other arts venues; interactive exhibits with a high risk of personal contact in museums and other cultural venues; and limiting team sports (Ontario, 2020ho). Residents living in modified Stage 2 regions are also asked to limit their trips outside the home, except for essential purposes, and avoid travel to lower transmission areas, except for essential purposes. Regions entering modified Stage 2 would be required to follow these restrictions for a minimum 28-day period, until the CMOH determined there was adequate evidence of reduced community transmission. Effective October 10, Ottawa, Peel and Toronto public health units were the first regions in Ontario to enter this modified Stage 2 (ibid); weddings were permitted until October 13, reportedly “given the extraordinary costs associated with these functions (Ontario, 2020ho).

On October 17, York region was added to list of regions in modified Stage 2 (Ontario, 2020hq)

On October 20, the province clarified that for the regions in modified Stage 2 (Toronto, Ottawa, York and Peel), in-person dance classes would be permitted if specific measures could be met (Ontario, 2020ht). Specifically, the clarification stated that certain activities, such as ballet, could be practiced more safely than other activities, such as gymnastics.

Color-coded framework

Indicators used in the province's color level system included the local COVID-19 epidemiology, such as COVID-19 incidence and test positivity; health system capacity, namely hospital and ICU capacity, as well as ventilator and PPE access; public health capacity, specifically the proportion of new cases being followed and contacts being followed up by contact and case managers within 24 hours; and testing capacity, especially within vulnerable populations, such as LTC residents (Ontario, 2020jc). These indicators would be considered in the province's weekly decision to enhance or relax public health measures in each region. In order for measures to be relaxed, the region would need to show evidence of improving indicators for at least 28 days, or roughly two COVID-19 incubation periods (ibid).

On November 3, the province released a color-coded framework, *COVID-19 Response Framework – Keeping Ontario Safe and Open*, outlining which measures would be used to inform any enhanced public health measures, or possible lockdowns, during the second wave of COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020jd). The specific indicators and thresholds used in this color-coded framework are outlined below (Tables 2). Specific guidance and public health measures were also provided for multiple sectors, including education, restaurants and bars, sports and recreational fitness centers, meeting and event spaces, retail, person

care services, casinos and other gaming establishments, cinemas, and performing arts centers. Two examples are outlined in Table 3 found in Appendix B. In brief, under Green – Prevent, standard measures would be taken, such as limiting large gatherings and implementing public health measures, such as physical distancing. Under Yellow – Protect, these measures would be strengthened; for example, by reducing the permitted size for fitness classes, implementing hours of sale and consumption of alcohol at bars and restaurants, etc. Under Orange – Restrict, further restrictions would be introduced, such as further limits of class sizes and the sales/consumption of alcohol. Under Red – Control, most sectors would be capped at 10 people indoors or 25 outdoors and activities known to increase viral transmission, such as live music performances, would be prohibited (Ontario, 2020jd).

Under the province's Grey – Lockdown level, most businesses would be prohibited from delivering in-person services, including restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments (only take-out, delivery and drive-through options were permitted); personal care services; casinos and other gaming establishments; indoor sports and recreation facilities, including pools; and non-essential retail (only curbside pick-up and delivery permitted), excluding grocery stores, pharmacies, hardware stores, big box retailers selling groceries or alcohol, safety supply stores and convenience stores (Ontario, 2020jc). Further, all indoor gatherings would be banned, and outdoor gatherings capped at 10 people; wedding, funeral, religious and similar services were permitted with up to 10 people, indoors or outdoors (ibid).

Notably, schools, day care and post-secondary instruction are permitted to remain open throughout the framework, including for the purposes of before and after school care; however, for regions in Grey – Lockdown, post-secondary instruction would be required to move online, with limited exceptions for critical in-person training, such as trades and clinical training, and would be capped at a maximum of 10 people (Ontario, 2020jc).

During the initial announcement of the new framework, no regions were scheduled to enter Red – Control or Grey – Lockdown once it took effect on November 7 (Ontario, 2020ih). However, the day before the new framework took effect, it was announced that Toronto would remain in modified Stage 2 until November 14, at which point it would move to Red – Control, and Peel Region would enter Red – Control (Ontario, 2020im). In response to Peel region's worsening epidemiological situation, the MOH of Peel Region, Dr. Loh, had previously moved Peel region into Red – Control on November 7, prior to any provincially mandated order (Ontario, 2020fg). Further, Toronto's MO, Dr. de Villa, used her legal authority to prevent Toronto from entering the Red level, as this would have permitted the re-opening of indoor dining, as well as bars, fitness classes, gaming establishments, and other high-risk locations (Yang & Allen, 2020). As of November 14, two regions (Ottawa and York) would entered Orange – Restrict, ten Yellow- Protect and the rest remaining in Green – Prevent (Ontario, 2020im).

A November 11 article from the Toronto Star, one of Ontario's largest newspapers organizations, outlined concerns from senior public health leaders in the province, suggesting that the Premier and provincial COVID-19 decision-makers had not heeded advice given to them from medical and public health experts (Yang & Allen, 2020). Specifically, the MOH sought the advice of experts from PHO to provide indicators for its color-coded framework; these experts only saw the final plan when it was announced to the public and were shocked to find the threshold used in the framework were magnitudes higher than what they had suggested (ibid). Specifically, the threshold for incidence and percent positivity were four-times greater than what the province's experts had suggested. The province also faced considerable backlash

regarding a lack of transparency regarding who it was receiving its medical advice from, and officials refused to provide any specific names. Notably, in response to questions raised regarding the framework's thresholds, the Minister of Health named the Ontario COVID-19 Modelling Consensus Table as one source of advice; however, the co-chair of this table, Dr. Sander, said the minister must have "misspoke" because their table was not consulted (ibid). Instead, Dr. Sander said that she agreed the thresholds currently used in the framework were too high to enable the province to proactively respond to the pandemic (ibid).

On November 13, the province announced it would be lowering the thresholds for each level in its *Keeping Ontario Safe and Open Framework* (Ontario, 2020iu). The specific changes are provided in Table 2 of Appendix B; the new thresholds more closely aligned with those suggested by PHO.

Lockdown

Effective November 23, Peel and Toronto regions became the first to enter the province's new Grey – Lockdown level (Ontario, 2020aj).

Of the many services cancelled in regions within the Grey – Lockdown level was in-vehicle road tests (effective November 23); however, other in-person DriveTest would remain permitted, with capacity limits and public health measures in place (Ontario, 2020jj).

Throughout November and December, several more regions have moved into Red – Control and Grey – Lockdown; in total, 8 and 5 regions, respectively, were in the province's Grey and Red levels as of December 20 (Ontario, 2020b).

"Safe at Home" Province-wide shutdown

In response to rising case counts (e.g., a 7-day streak of over 2,000 cases per day), reduced hospital capacity (e.g. a 74% increase in COVID-19 admissions in the prior 4-week period) and new model projections (e.g. the number of ICU admissions were guaranteed to exceed the province's 300 bed threshold within 10 days), Premier Ford announced a province-wide lockdown. Specifically, on December 21, he announced that effective December 26 most regions would enter a mandatory 28-day lockdown; Northern Ontario would enter a 14-day lockdown (Ontario, 2020lj). In addition to the measures outlined under the province's Grey – Lockdown level, all elementary and secondary schools would switch to remote learning for the first week of January (i.e., January 4-8); secondary students in Southern Ontario would not be permitted to return to in-person classes until at least January 25 (ibid). While child care centers would be permitted to remain open, they would not be permitted to care for school-aged children during the lockdown time (ibid); a targeted emergency child care program for school-aged children would be made available to parents in need, at no cost (ibid).

Further, during the shutdown, only gatherings among those of the same household would be permitted; however, individuals living alone could consider creating a bubble with one other household (Ontario, 2020lj). Further enhanced restrictions during the province-wide shutdown included restricting the number of patrons in essential businesses to a maximum of 50% capacity (e.g., for grocery stores) and 25% for big box stores and stores that sell alcohol (ibid). All other retailers would be closed to in-person shopping; however, curbside pickup and delivery were permitted. For non-essential retailers located in shopping malls, a designated pickup area would be used for pickups by appointment. Further, meeting

and event spaces would only be permitted to open for critical activities, such as court services, and no new short-term rental would be permitted, except for individual in need of housing (ibid).

Notably, the weekend prior to Premier Ford announcing the province-wide shutdown, it was leaked that the province would be announcing a province-wide shutdown starting on December 24 (Davidson, 2020). It was later confirmed that the shutdown was originally set to begin on December 24 but was pushed back to December 26 by Cabinet on December 21, hours prior to the Premier's official announcement (ibid). The decision to delay the province's shutdown was highly criticized by medical and public health experts, including the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) (CBC News, 2020c). The province had witnessed a 7-day streak of case counts exceeding 2000 per day and the OHA and several hospitals has released a joint statement outlining that their ICUs were reaching capacity and staff were stretched thin (CBC News, 2020c). Modeling released on December 21 suggested that the pandemic may soon become unsustainable for Ontario's health care system, and explicitly compared the difference in COVID-19 numbers which could be achieved by starting a "hard lockdown" on December 21 compared to December 28 (Science Table, 2020b). Further, in response to media questions regarding the delayed lockdown, Dr. Naveed Mohammad (CEO, William Osler Health System in Peel Region) replied suggesting that people act as if the lockdown had started immediately (CBC News, 2020c).

6. Measures in other sectors

Many measures beyond the immediate scope of the health system are being taken to prevent further spread of the virus. This section contains information on many of these areas, including border and travel restrictions and economic and fiscal measures, among others.

6.1 State of Emergency

On March 17, 2020, the Government of Ontario declared a state of emergency under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMPCPA)* due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Ontario, 2020k). This declaration meant that facilities, including indoor recreational programs, public libraries, private schools, licensed child care centres, bars and restaurants, theatres, and concert venues, must close immediately. The statement also prohibited organized public events of over 50 people. On March 28, the government took further action to prohibit gatherings of more than five people (Ontario, 2020u). This order has been repeatedly renewed throughout the pandemic and currently remains in effect.

Fines for violating the measures enacted through the provincial order can range from CA\$750 to CA\$100,000, including up to one year in jail (Toronto, 2020a). Physical distancing measures are enforced locally, according to municipal bylaws; thus, the maximum fines and other penalties vary by region. For example, in Toronto, individuals failing to abide by distancing orders can face a fine up to CA\$1,000 and fines of up to CA\$5,000 can be issued, subject to court convictions (Toronto, 2020a). Several municipalities also provide websites, phone lines and other means for residents to report individuals not adhering to distancing laws (Toronto, 2020a).

The province's state of emergency has been continuously renewed throughout the pandemic, with the most recent state of emergency order in effect until July 24, 2020. In all, the province issued 47 emergency

orders while under a provincial state of emergency between March 17 and July 24, 2020 (Ontario Auditor General, 2020)

Since July 24, 2020, the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (ROA)*, a new piece of legislation passed on July 21 (described further in Section 5.1), has replaced the province's state of emergency orders (Ontario, 2020fe). All orders under the state of emergency remained in effect through the ROA for 30 days after the state of emergency ended and can be renewed for subsequent 30-day periods.

On August 20, it was announced that the ROA would be extended to September 22, with exceptions made for the education sector, for which orders would end on August 31 to permit the re-opening of schools (Ontario, 2020fe). The ROA was later extended to October 22 and, later, until November 21; the latter included an exception for the *Electricity Price for Regulated Price Plan (RPP)*, which was extended only until October 31 (Ontario, 2020ht).

Most recently, the ROA was extended until January 20, 2021 (Ontario, 2020kk).

6.2 Border Control, Mobility and Travel

Internal travel

There are currently no restrictions in place that prevent individuals from entering Ontario from another province or territory in Canada. Internal travel restrictions have not been mandated at the provincial; however, throughout the pandemic authorities have asked residents to limit interregional travel.

Notably, many Ontarians visit their cottages during the Easter weekend, the first holiday of the pandemic; however, provincial authorities, including the Premier and CMOH, repeatedly asked residents to avoid making the trip this year in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to these rural and possibly remote communities (Carter, 2020). While Ontario's emergency order prevented new short-term rentals, thereby reducing the number of would-be cottage-goers, there was no official legislation prohibiting cottage owners from visiting their cottages or renters who had booked prior to the emergency order. It was later revealed that the Premier had visited his own cottage during the Easter weekend, reportedly he traveled alone for the sole purpose of checking his cottage's plumbing; this was met with much public backlash, particularly given his repeated pleas for others to not visit their cottages (Carter, 2020).

Similar controversy arose during the May holiday weekend (i.e., Victoria Day long weekend), which is traditionally the kick-off weekend for cottage-goers. In early May, the Premier suggested that the pandemic restrictions might be relaxed in time for the long weekend but, after a joint call with the mayors from Ontario's cottage regions, the Premier continued to ask would-be cottage goers to stay home and urged any cottage owners who urgently needed to check their properties to practice physical distancing while in cottage region and, ideally, bring all their required materials as to avoid potentially spreading COVID-19 to these communities (ibid).

Concerns over COVID-19 spreading to these communities and placing an unmanageable burden on their health care systems, prompted many cottage region mayors and medical officers of health to consider travel and other restrictions to dissuade would-be cottage goers. While the CMOH issued a memo stated that he would not formally issue a travel ban, several local MOHs considered issuing their own travel ban orders (D'Mello, 2020b; Humphreys, 2020). On April 23, 2020, one such MOH issued a travel ban targeting

would-be cottage goers; however, the order was rescinded ahead of the May long weekend, before it was to come into effect (Humphreys, 2020). Other local authorities considered other measures to dissuade cottage travel, such as preventing water and other utilities from being turned on in seasonal dwellings; however, these were met with similar civil liberties concerns as the suggested travel bans and were not implemented (ibid).

Similarly, residents were urged to avoid gatherings and practice physical distancing during the July Canada Day weekend. A number of traditionally scheduled in-person events were cancelled and, instead, virtual activities were offered (Ontario, 2020a). Further, throughout early October, authorities reminded Ontarians about the importance of celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday with only those from their household and avoid non-essential travel – particularly given rising case counts across the province. Ahead of the Thanksgiving weekend, Premier Ford issued a statement encouraging Ontarians to forego traditional gatherings for online celebrations, and keeping any in-person gatherings limited to their immediate household members; he also reminded Ontarians to download Ontario’s COVID-19 exposure notification application (Ontario, 2020hg)

Some municipalities and transit providers have taken steps to ensure the safety of their employees and users of the services. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), for example, made a statement on March 19 ordering bus operators to stop handing paper transfers out to customers and, on March 23, asked that customers enter through the rear doors of its buses (TTC, 2020a). GO Transit, a regional public transit service, has also taken steps to reduce risks, including increased cleaning and distancing measures and, in response to reduced ridership, have also reduced services such as the Union-Person Express, which services Toronto’s Pearson International Airport (CBC News, 2020a). On September 2, the province distributed comprehensive public health guidance documents to transit operators across the province (Ontario, 2020fn). All transit authorities have also implemented measures to support physical distancing, such as physical barriers and spaced seating, and to prevent transmission, such as mandatory face covering policies. For example, since July 2, face coverings have been mandatory for all TTC riders over two years of age (TTC, 2020b).

External travel

Other than federal travel restrictions, no external travel restrictions are in place in Ontario.

6.3 Economic Measures

Federal support

On October 28, 2020, the province announced CA\$1.05B in new joint federal-provincial funding, called the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure stream, for health and safety projects, particularly those planning to build or renovate infrastructure, in LTC (CA\$100M), education (CA\$700M) or municipalities (CA\$250M) (Ontario, 2020ic). Of the funds deducted to municipal projects, CA\$6.5M would be earmarked for projects targeting Indigenous and on-reserve education activities (ibid). Eligible projects under the COVID-19 Resilience stream include community, recreation, health and education renovations (e.g., retrofits, repairs or upgrades to LTC facilities, public schools or shelters); COVID-19 response infrastructure (e.g., ventilation

or renovations to enable physical distancing); active transportation; and disaster mitigation, adaptation, or remediation.

On December 16, the provincial government announced an additional CA\$695M in financial relief for municipalities, building on the first phase of the provincial-federal Safe Restart Agreement (Ontario, 2020kw).

Several other joint federal-provincial investments have been outlined elsewhere in this document; particularly, throughout the pandemic, there have been numerous joint investments to support the safe re-opening and continued operations of essential sectors, such as agri-food industries.

Public financial support

On August 12, 2020, the province released its 2020-21 first quarter financial report and announced that its investments into *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19* had reached approximately CA\$30B; the program was initially announced on March 25 with a CA\$17B investment (Ontario, 2020ew).

On September 30, the province announced it would be providing CA\$2.8B to support the delivery of its COVID-19 Fall Preparedness Plan (Ontario, 2020gr). Specific funding would be allocated to ensuring the province's health care, LTC, and education systems were prepared for the fall wave of COVID-19 and could quickly respond to outbreaks and case surges. The plan was supported through a CA\$2.8M investment from the provincial government and focuses on six key areas:

- CA\$1.376M towards continued public health measures and the expansion of testing and case and contact management;
- CA\$70M towards the delivery of the largest influenza vaccination campaign in Ontario's history;
- CA\$30M towards the rapid identification, management and prevention of COVID-19 outbreaks;
- CA\$283.7M supporting efforts to reduce the backlog in essential health services stemming from the previous reduction of services;
- CA\$457.5M to prepare for surges in COVID-19 cases in the health care system;
- CA\$52.5M to recruit, retain, train and support health care workers and caregivers, including CA\$14M to train person support workers (PSWs) and CA\$10.3M to recruit and retrain recent PSW graduates to LTC, home and community care;
- CA\$1.3B in support for the safe reopening of schools and child care centers, including funding for new staff, PPE, testing, mental health supports, improved ventilation and technological devices; and
- CA\$540M in LTC investments, outlined in *COVID-19: Long-Term Care Preparedness*, including CA\$405M towards operating pressures related to COVID-19, CA\$61.4M in minor capital repairs and renovations in homes to improve infection prevention and control, CA\$40M in support to facilities impacted occupancy changes as a result of COVID-19, CA\$30M towards the hiring of more infection prevention and control staff, and CA\$2.8M to extend the High Wage Transition Fund (ibid).

On November 5, the province released its 2020 budget: *Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*; during this announcement, the province outlined its estimated CA\$13.5B in total support for people and business during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ij). This included a child benefit to offset costs incurred

during the pandemic (CA\$200 per child under 12 years of age, CA\$250 for children and youth under 21 years of age with special needs); a new Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit for 2021 (a 25% credit on eligible renovations, up to CA\$10,000); CA\$300M in financial relief for eligible businesses affected by the pandemic closures, CA\$4.8B to support job creation initiatives; tax cuts for businesses (which would create CA\$450M in annual savings in 2021); property tax reliefs for businesses (which would create up to C\$385M in tax relief by 2022-2023); expanding the Employer Health Tax (EHT) exemption permanently; and electricity cost reliefs for businesses (ibid).

On November 17, the province announced the launch of its *COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure* stream for municipalities, which would offer CA\$250, of the previously announced CA\$1.05B joint federal-provincial investment, to advance critical local infrastructure projects (Ontario, 2020ix). Eligible infrastructure projects include those supporting physical distancing, social infrastructure, active transportation and disaster mitigation projects.

On December 16, the provincial government announced an additional CA\$695M in financial relief for municipalities, building on the first phase of the provincial-federal Safe Restart Agreement (Ontario, 2020kw). Specifically, CA\$299M would be allocated across all 444 municipalities in the province, to ensure they do not carry over operating deficits into their 2021 budgets; the remaining CA\$396M would be allocated to the 48 municipalities hardest hit by the pandemic.

Sectoral and business financial support

General Business Supports

The Government of Ontario has made numerous investments in businesses in Ontario, as well as provided a number of resources to support their safe re-opening and contributions to the province's pandemic response, such as retooling to produce medical supplies and equipment.

On March 25, 2020, the province launched its *Stop the Spread Business Information Line*, a toll-free telephone line dedicated to providing support to businesses with questions about the province's recent emergency order (Ontario, 2020t).

On March 26, it announced a CA\$1.9 billion relief fund (over and above the CA\$3.3 billion noted above), as part of Ontario's *Action Plan*, for employers to reduce their financial strain during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministry of Labour, 2020). The government also announced tax cuts of CA\$355 million for about 57,000 employers through a proposed temporary increase to the EHT exemption (Ministry of Labour, 2020). As well, it proposed a new Corporate Income Tax Credit to help support regions lagging in employment growth (Ontario, 2020s).

On March 28, the Ontario government announced new measures to combat price gouging to ensure that businesses are not raising prices significantly on necessary goods for people living in Ontario (Ontario, 2020v). Retail businesses and individuals charging unfair prices on necessary goods, including masks and gloves, non-prescription medications to treat the symptoms of COVID-19, disinfecting agents, and personal hygiene products, may face charges up to CA\$750, with a maximum penalty of one year in jail or CA\$100,000, for individuals and fines up to CA\$500,000 or a year in jail for company directors, up to a maximum of CA\$10 million, if convicted (Ontario, 2020ba). Ontarians may report suspected instances of price gouging using a dedicated provincial [reporting website](#).

On April 4, the provincial government announced a new online portal to increase access to adequate food supply (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2020a). The website ([Ontario.ca/AgFoodJobs](https://ontario.ca/AgFoodJobs)) connects workers and employers in the food sector, making it easier to match people to essential jobs and training. Further, on April 17, the government announced they would be investing up to CA\$1 million in new funding to connect workers with jobs in the agri-food sector to keep the nations supply chains strong (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2020b).

On April 9, the government announced the new Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee to help business after the pandemic is over (Ontario, 2020ah). On April 28, the provincial government announced a new website, [*COVID-19: Tackling the Barriers*](#), as mentioned in Section 5.2. The website accepts proposals for temporarily changing rules and regulations for businesses in Ontario (Ontario, 2020ay). Through the website businesses working to retool their operations to produce health-related products, or those that want to continue their operations in this new environment of physical distancing, can submit roadblocks to the website. The province will use this information to change provincial rules and regulations in an effort to remove the barriers that are hindering businesses.

On May 1, the Government of Ontario announced that they would defer a portion of Global Adjustment chargers for industrial and commercial electricity consumers that do not participate in the Regulated Price Plan for the period starting from April 2020 (Ontario, 2020bd). This initiative will provide temporary immediate relief on monthly electricity bills in April, May and June. Later, on June 26, the Government of Ontario announced that it would be introducing stable electricity pricing for industrial and commercial companies for the next two years, with the aim of providing predictability to support businesses as they return to full levels of operation (Ontario, 2020bd).

On July 3, the Government of Ontario announced it had invested CA\$3M to launch an online training platform to provide free health and safety training to job seekers and workers (Ontario, 2020di). Specifically, ten virtual courses would be offered through Employment Ontario, covering topics such as infection control and conducting health and safety incident investigations. Also on July 3, a CA\$4M investment towards supporting a local construction training program was announced (Ontario, 2020dj). Led by Georgina Trades Training Inc. (GTTI), the project will train a maximum of 100 job seekers for construction-related professions and use these skills to build new modular housing units.

Starting August 10, the province began reopening 24 apprentice and trade-related certification examination centers across the province (Ontario, 2020fr). Apprentices and journey person applicants normally have a 12-month deadline to pass their exams; however, a six-month extension was provided on March 18, 2020 as a result of the pandemic closures (ibid). The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and external partners, e.g. unions and colleges, identified additional examination spaces to rapidly clear the existing testing backlog.

On September 3, the province extending existing job protection measures to prevent temporary layoffs occurring during the pandemic from automatically becoming permanent job loses (Ontario, 2020fp). Under Ontario's labour laws, after 13 weeks of being temporarily laid off, the person's job is permanent lost and this automatically triggers economic payouts; during the pandemic, these payouts could result in business closures as a result of inadequate funds. This new regulatory amendment would delay these terminations and severance liabilities (ibid).

On September 17, Ontario introduced new legislation, *Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act*, which would change the *Commercial Tenancies Act* to extend the province's temporary ban on evictions for commercial tenants (Ontario, 2020gd). This eviction ban, initially in place between May 1 and August 31, would align with the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) federal rent assistance program for small businesses.

As part of *Ontario's Action Plan*, CA\$8M investments were made to help small businesses reach more customers through the Digital Main Street platform, developed in partnership with the federal government to help businesses create and enhance their online presence and generate jobs for students (Ontario, 2020ew).

On October 7, the provincial government announced the Main Street Recovery Plan, and its plans to introduce the Main Street Recovery Act, 2020, to support the recovery of local small businesses (Ontario, 2020hb). Eligible small businesses, with 2-9 employees, would be eligible to receive a one-time grant of up to CA\$1,000 to help offset the costs of PPE; further, the Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network and Digital Main Street Squads would assist businesses with their online presence and provide advice on available support programs (ibid). The Ontario's Small Business Recovery Webpage would provide businesses with a platform to access these supports. If passed the act would allow businesses to include alcohol with food as part of takeout and delivery orders, permit 24/7 deliveries, and other legislative changes to support their economic prosperity during the pandemic (ibid).

On November 3, the province announced a CA\$300M investment would be made available to businesses financially impacted as a result of pandemic closures, particularly those required to close or significantly reduce services as a result of being in a Modified Stage 2, Red – Control or Grey – Lockdown region (Ontario, 2020ih). Specifically, starting November 16, eligible businesses could apply for temporary property tax and energy cost rebates through the province's online application portal.

On November 6, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of over CA\$600,000 to the Office of the Worker Adviser and the Office of the Employer Adviser to support workers and small businesses in navigating the province's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's compensation system (Ontario, 2020ik).

On November 19, the province announced it was launching a series of education and enforcement campaigns across the province to ensure businesses were taking the appropriate steps to protect employees, customers and the public (Ontario, 2020iz). Over 200 provincial offenses officers would be deployed across the province, supporting local police, by-law officers, and public health inspectors. In addition to ensuring compliance with enforcing public health guidelines, officers would ask businesses to produce their workplace safety plans and would deliver educational campaigns in high-risk businesses in strategic areas (ibid).

On November 19, the Government of Ontario announced a CA\$2.2M investment, through the Ontario Together Fund, to provide small businesses with free, tailored financial advice and online financial training (Ontario, 2020ja). CA\$2.04M would be used to create a new Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network, to enhance the capacity of small businesses across the province to expand their services and build a central online portal for businesses to access digital tools, training, and information and connect with experts and mentors (ibid). CA\$131,000 would be delivered to the Chartered Professional Accountants of

Canada to create and deliver a 4-part online COVID-19 financial literacy tool kit for small businesses; another CA\$51,000 to the Financial Advisors Association of Canada to provide free financial advice to small businesses through its platform (ibid).

On November 20, as the province announced the first regions entering its new Grey – Lockdown level, the government announced CA\$600M in relief to eligible businesses required to close, or significantly reduce services, as part of public health measures; thereby, doubling the province’s initial commitment of CA\$300M outlined in the province’s 2020 budget, *Ontario’s Action Plan: Protect, Support Recover* (Ontario, 2020jc). The property tax and energy cost rebates delivered through the program would cover the length of time businesses were impacted as a result of Red – Control or Grey – Lockdown measures, with most businesses receiving their payments within weeks of completing the online application (ibid). a detailed list of eligible businesses was made available online: [Ontario.ca/covidsupport](https://ontario.ca/covidsupport).

On December 4, the province announced a three-year CA\$20M investment to support small businesses sponsor and train apprentices through a new *Group Sponsorship Program* (Ontario, 2020jz); the funding came as part of the province’s Skilled Trades Strategy outlined in its 2020 budget.

On December 8, the province proposed a new piece of legislation, *The Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, 2020*, which would, if passed, protect employers from an unexpected increase in Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) premium, while ensuring employees continue to be fairly compensated for work-related injuries and occupational diseases during pandemic (Ontario, 2020kd). The Ontario Legislature adjourned for the 2020 year the same day; as such, the bill has not yet passed (Ontario, 2020kc).

On December 17, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development announced that a number of regulatory amendments that were put in place at the start of the pandemic would be adopted through the creation of new legislation (Ontario, 2020lc). Specifically, the province would be extending regulatory changes to the Employment Standards Act to July 3, 2021, which were previously set to expire on January 2, 2021 (ibid). These changes include, for example, job protection leave for non-unionized employees whose hours are temporarily reduced due to the pandemic, to prevent temporary layoffs from becoming permanent. The ministry also announced a CA\$77M investment, through the Second Career Grant program, to support training for workers who were laid off as a result of the pandemic (ibid). Specifically, the program would offer up to C\$28,000 in tuition, training and living expenses for over 2,750 job seekers looking to find new careers in their communities (ibid).

In response to the province-wide shutdown, on December 21, the Government of Ontario introduced the *Ontario Small Business Support Grant*, which would offer CA\$10,000 – \$20,000 to eligible small businesses (i.e., <100 employees) financially impacted by the lockdown closures (i.e., ≥20% revenue loss) (Ontario, 2020lk). The funds would be allocated as part of the CA\$13.5B in financial support for individuals and businesses outlined in the province’s 2020 Budget, *Ontario’s Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover* (ibid)

Made-In-Ontario Businesses and Products

Throughout the pandemic, the provincial government and, particularly, Premier Doug Ford has been a vocal proponent of promoting local businesses and products produced in Ontario.

On June 30, 2020, the Ontario Government announced it would be celebrating International Small Business Week by launching the "Shop Local! Shop Safe! Shop with Confidence!" campaign, which encouraged Ontarians to support local small businesses (Ontario, 2020de). Assuring Ontarians could shop safely and with confidence, the province's *People Outside Safely Together (POST)* Promise encourages small businesses to strictly follow health guidelines (ibid).

On July 10, the Government of Ontario announced the launch of the Ontario Made Program, on behalf of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME). Funding for Ontario Made was procured through the CA\$50M Ontario Together Fund that the province previously launched on April 1, 2020 (Ontario, 2020dq). A part of the Ontario Made program, a new logo would be created to support Ontario consumers in identifying and buying products made in Ontario; a website (SupportOntarioMade.ca) was also launched.

As part of the province's many funding initiatives for local businesses, on July 15, the provincial government announced an investment of over CA\$1.4M, through its NOHFC, in three local businesses in Northern Ontario (Ontario, 2020ds). Furthering its made-in-Ontario activities, on July 23, the province announced that it would be providing CA\$110,000 to the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) through the Ontario Together Fund (Ontario, 2020ec). Specifically, the funding would support the creation of a data-driven report investigating the effects of COVID-19 within the Indigenous business community; assist Indigenous businesses in navigating various COVID-19 programs and opportunities; and enhance CCAB's online resource platform.

On December 15, the province announced a CA\$1.3M investment towards the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium to train new and existing employees in two Ontario cities (Ottawa, London); the funding came as part of the 2020 budget (Ontario, 2020kr).

On December 16, the province launched its news "Support Local" marketing campaign, which encourages people to "show your love for local" by supporting local businesses and tourism (Ontario, 2020ku). Specifically, the advertising campaign will be delivered through television, radio, digital and social media from mid-December 2020 through mid-January 2021.

Truck Drivers

On April 30, 2020, the provincial government announced a new free app, called Ontario 511, that provides truck drivers with immediate access to the information they need to stay safe, fed and rested while delivering essential goods across the province (Ontario, 2020ba). The app also includes up-to-date highway information on construction, collisions and road closures.

As described in Section 1.5, targeted testing centers have also been introduced to increase testing accessibility for truck drivers. For example, the province introduced testing sites at truck stops and offered opportunities for mobile testing.

Agricultural and Agri-food Sectors

In partnership with the federal government, on May 8, the Government of Ontario announced they would be investing CA\$2.25 in provincially licensed meat processing plants to better protect employees and ensure the continued supply of healthy products (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2020b). Additional support for the agricultural industry was announced on May 14, through a joint investment of

CA\$2.25 million between the government of Canada and the provincial government. The funding will help farmers protect employees and ensure continued supply of health food products by providing money for purchasing PPE, enhancing cleaning and disinfection and redesigning workstations (Canada, 2020a).

Given repeat outbreaks across Southern Ontario's agricultural and agri-food sectors, particularly in the Windsor-Essex Health Unit, the Government of Ontario released a three-point plan on June 24, with the intent of preventing outbreaks on farms and in nearby communities (Ontario, 2020cy). The plan included:

- Ongoing and expanded testing, including onsite and asymptomatic testing;
- Enhanced access to employment benefits and supports, ensuring the sector's large proportion of highly skilled, temporary migrant workers received the same benefits and protections as other workers in Ontario under the *Employment Standards Act* and Ontario's new infectious disease emergency leave policies, which protect workers while on unpaid leave due to COVID-19 (e.g. during mandatory quarantine or isolation). In certain circumstances, temporary workers would also be eligible for the CERB benefit; and
- New public health guidance from the CMOH, which allowed positive asymptomatic workers to continue working as long as they follow the public health measures in their workplace to minimize the risk of transmission to others.

On July 3, the Government of Ontario introduced new and amended emergency orders to support the safe re-opening of restaurants (Ontario, 2020dk). Particularly the changes, under s.7.0.2 of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, would allow municipalities to quickly pass temporary bylaws for the creation and extension of patios and covered outdoor dining areas. The government issued a clarification that outdoor dining areas can (re-)open, so long as they have a roof, canopy, tent, awning or other covering, with at least two full sides of the outdoor dining area remaining open to the outdoors, and the roof, if any, must be fully open (ibid). Monitoring adherence to these bylaws and enforcement would be the responsibility of municipalities, including ensuring proper health and safety practices, including adequate physical distancing.

To provide further support to the impacted agricultural and agri-food sectors and support workplace safety, on July 9, the Government of Ontario announced it would be enhancing its AgriInsurance program's coverage for the 2020 growing season to include labour shortages due to COVID-19, e.g. as a result of quarantine or isolation measures (Ontario, 2020do). On July 16, the province also expanded its existing Risk Management Program by CA\$50M, for a total of CA\$150M annually, to support farmers with any unforeseen challenges, such as drought and disease (Ontario, 2020dt).

On October 13, the federal and provincial governments announced additional measures to help farmers better protect the health and safety of agri-food workers, while also ensuring the continued supply of locally grown food (Ontario, 2020hh). The new agreement included a CA\$11.6M investment from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada towards building physical barriers for workplaces, upgraded HVAC systems, and enhanced sanitation (ibid).

On November 9, the province announced a CA\$5M investment to help offset any revenue losses experienced by eligible agricultural and horticultural societies during the pandemic, e.g. as a result of the cancellation of fairs or exhibits (Ontario, 2020io).

On November 16, a new comprehensive strategy for reducing the spread of COVID-19 in the agri-food sector was announced by the provincial government, in partnership with the agri-food industry (Ontario, 2020iv). The strategy, *Prevention, Control and Outbreak Support Strategy for COVID-19 in Ontario's Farm Workers*, outlines principles and specific actions for enhanced prevention and control, worker safety and wellness, and the sustainability of the agri-food sector. Specifically, the strategy is founded on three key areas of prevention and containment: before the farm; on the farm; and worker housing (ibid). This included a three-year CA\$25.5M investment to support workplace safety and support the province's food supply chain through the Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program (ibid).

On November 27, it was announced that the provincial and federal governments would be committing CA\$11.5M, through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, to support two new programs to support increased capacity at provincial meat processing plants and help farmers adjust to market challenges caused by the pandemic (Ontario, 2020jo).

On November 26, the province introduced new legislation, *Supporting Local Restaurants Act, 2020*, which, if passed, would cap delivery fees charged by food delivery companies in regions where indoor dining is prohibited to 15% (Ontario, 2020jm); currently, such fees can be as high as 30%. The act would also introduce fines, of up to CA\$10M, for companies that do not comply with this law and provide protection to employees performing delivery services to ensure their compensation is not affected by these changes (ibid). Reportedly, the goal of the act is to protect local restaurants and the compensation of delivery drivers, while ensuring food delivery companies would not reduce service areas or restaurant selection in lockdown regions (ibid).

On December 9, the province announced that it would be extending its previous temporary order allowing licensed restaurants and bars to include alcohol with food as part of a takeout, delivery, and meal kit orders, as well as allowing eligible alcohol manufacturers to deliver their own products directly to consumers (Ontario, 2020kf). The change reportedly would support local restaurants, bars, breweries, wineries and distilleries during the pandemic by expanding opportunities for sales (ibid).

On December 10, a joint federal-provincial investment of over CA\$3.5M was announced, which would support over 700 businesses in Ontario's agri-food sector establish or expand their online presence and provide consumers with more local options during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ki).

On December 15, the governments of Canada and Ontario announced a joint investment of up to CA\$1.8M towards improving food safety, animal welfare, and biosecurity in Ontario's meat processing plants (Ontario, 2020c). Several of the approved projects aimed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, e.g. through enhancements to ventilation (ibid).

On December 18, the province accounted a joint provincial and federal investment of up to CA\$5M in immediate, emergency relief for the province's beef farming industry (Ontario, 2020ld). Specifically, the funding would target farmers impacted by processing delays as a result of COVID-19 (ibid).

Tourism, cultural and sports sectors

On June 19, 2020, as regions began to enter Stage 2 of Ontario's reopening strategy and tourism activities begin to resume, the Government of Ontario announced it would be providing the Niagara region's tourism sector a CA\$25M loan to support the Niagara Parks Commission (Ontario, 2020cv). Another

investment, of up to CA\$12.8M, was announced on December 4 (Ontario, 2020ka). Notably, Niagara Falls is one of Canada's largest tourist attractions.

On July 20, the Government of Ontario announced CA\$2M in financial support for Ontario Place, a large outdoor events venue in Toronto, to provide opportunities for Ontarians to safely engage with entertainment and arts activities during the summer (Ontario, 2020dw). Activities included free drive-in movies, screenings from the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), and a virtual jazz festival. Further on September 11, the province announced CA\$5.5M in funding to support Northern Ontario's film and television industries and, on September 28, CA\$1.3M in funding, through the Ontario Creates grants, to support 99 Canadian film, TV and digital content organizations across Ontario (Ontario, 2020fy, 2020gq).

On August 6, the province announced a CA\$1.5M investment through its new Tourism Economic Development Recovery Fund. The funding would support promotional activities at provincial attractions with the goal of supporting the province's tourism industry reopen (Ontario, 2020es).

On August 14, the province announced a CA\$8M investment supporting the safe reopening of amateur sports across the province (Ontario, 2020ez). The funding would support enhanced public health measures at gyms and other fitness centers, which were permitted to reopen beginning August 15.

On August 20, the province announced a CA\$1.2M investment, through Destination Ontario and Designation Northern Ontario, to support a new digital and social media marketing campaign to encourage domestic tourism to Northern Ontario (Ontario, 2020fd).

On September 17, the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture announced that the 2021 Canada Summer Games would be postponed until 2022 (Ontario, 2020gc).

On October 8, the province announced a CA\$9M investment, through the new Reconnect Festival and Event Program, to support municipalities and other event organisers implement public health measures and develop innovative programs, such as online and drive-in or drive-by events (Ontario, 2020he). The Reconnect Festival and Event Program features events running from October 8 through December 1.

On November 5, the province released its 2020 budget: *Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*, which outlined over CA\$100M in investments, over two years., to the Community Building Fund to support local tourism, cultural and sporting organizations which had been financially impacted during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ij). A further CA\$180.5M 3-year investment would support workers in the tourism and hospitality sectors to undergo training and be connected with new jobs (ibid). Further, the budget outlined a commitment to provide Ontario residents with financial support, up to 20%, for eligible Ontario tourism expenses to encourage local tourism, deeming 2021 "*the year of the Ontario staycation*" (Ontario, 2020ij).

On December 3, the province announced an investment of nearly C\$4.4M to support the long-term sustainability of Ontario's tourism sector, including funding to support the delivery of safe and innovative activities, festivals and events and support operators impacted by the pandemic (Ontario, 2020fd).

On December 18, the province announced a C\$3.8M investment in the Shaw Centre, a convention centre in Ottawa, to ensure its continued operations and compliance with public health measures throughout the pandemic (Ontario, 2020lg).

Infrastructure

Over June and July 2020, the Government of Ontario made a series of announcements outlining new funding to enhance Ontario's infrastructure, thereby creating new employment opportunities and supporting the economic sustainability of communities across the province. A few of these investments and projects are highlighted here within. In recognition of the unique ways the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted rural and geographically isolated communities across the province, on June 19, the Government of Ontario announced new funding for ten road and bridge projects across Central and eastern Ontario, with the goal of supporting their COVID-19 recovery and sustainability (Ontario, 2020cu). On June 25, additional funding was announced supporting 12 road and bridge projects across Northern Ontario (Ontario, 2020cz). Specifically included was a CA\$23M investment from the Government of Canada through the Rural and Northern Communities Infrastructure Stream (RNIS); over CA\$12M from the Government of Ontario; and CA\$5M in contribution from municipalities and a First Nation community (ibid). On June 30, an additional CA\$30M in new funding towards road and highway improvements was announced, as part of the 2020-21 Connecting Links Program. The funding, delivered through *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19*, would support road and highway projects in nine more municipalities across the province, bringing the total annual investment for this program to CA\$40M (Ontario, 2020dc). On July 6, the Government of Ontario announced that it had developed a made-in-Ontario plan for growth, renewal and economic recovery, which included measures to accelerate the building of provincial highways, major transit infrastructure projects and quality, affordable housing (Ontario, 2020dl). On August 6, more plans for the use of these federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations community infrastructure funds were announced through the *Investing in Canada* infrastructure plan to support the construction of five bridges and roads connecting northern and rural communities across the province (Ontario, 2020er).

Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover outlined a four-year CA\$680M investment towards enhancing the province's broadband infrastructure, bringing the province's total investment to nearly CA\$1B over a six-year period (Ontario, 2020ij).

On December 10, the province released *Connecting the North: A Draft Transportation Plan for Northern Ontario*, which outlined 67 infrastructure activities to improve travel and transportation in Ontario's remote and northern communities, including remote First Nation communities, and promote post-COVID-19 economic development in Northern Ontario (Ontario, 2020kh).

On December 15, the province announced joint federal-provincial investments of CA\$3.7M and CA\$0.9M, respectively, in green infrastructure projects supporting residents of Pays Plat First Nation and Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation communities, e.g. new water filtration plants (Ontario, 2020kq).

Rural and northern businesses

As described above, a number of investments have been made by the province into the infrastructure of northern and rural communities across the province, supporting the ability of these communities to connect and economically prosper as the province re-opens, and provide these communities with longer term opportunities for sustainability and economic growth.

On July 23, 2020, the provincial government announced a CA\$3.3M cost-share program through the Rural Economic Development Program (RED). The funding would support 58 projects helping the economies of

rural and Indigenous communities across the province, by retaining skilled workers, supporting local infrastructure, creating new jobs, etc. (Ontario, 2020eb). For example, a CA\$150,000 investment towards the Young Agripreneurs Program (YAP) would support the training of youth interested in pursuing careers in agriculture (ibid).

On August 7, the province announced a CA\$1M investment, through NOHFC, to support the digital economy in Northern Ontario, including investment in software innovations, mobile applications, and other digital innovations (Ontario, 2020dp).

On September 28, the province announced the creation of a new short-term support program, the Northern Ontario Recovery Program (NORP), which would support northern businesses in adapting to the new COVID-19 public health measures (Ontario, 2020gp). Starting January 1, 2021, NORP will replace the existing NOHFC program (ibid).

On September 11, the provincial government announced its support for the construction of a new gold mine in northern Ontario, as part of its Made-in-Ontario and COVID-19 economic growth plans (Ontario, 2020fw). No specific dollar value was provided during this joint provincial and federal announcement.

On December 16, the province announced a CA\$1.4M investment, through NOHFC, towards helping Science North, a science center with locations throughout Northern Ontario, develop a series of regionally tailored events to stimulate tourism and economic activity throughout Northern Ontario (Ontario, 2020kv). For example, Science North will launch The Great Northern Ontario Roadshow in 2021, which will tour over 50 communities to highlight tourist attractions and natural wonders located throughout Northern Ontario (ibid).

Indigenous-owned businesses

Another announcement on June 19, 2020 outlined new sources of funding to support Indigenous-owned small and medium sized businesses across the province. Specifically, the Government of Ontario announced it would be provided CA\$10M to support the safe and gradual re-opening of these businesses (Ontario, 2020bb). Loans of up to CA\$50,000 would be made available, through the Support for People and Jobs Fund, to businesses that are ineligible, or unable to access, existing federal and provincial small business supports. Loans would also be made available through the Aboriginal Financial Institutions; a maximum of 50% of the loan amount would be made available to businesses through a non-repayable grant and no interest would be due on the loan portion until December 31, 2022 (ibid). These funds could be used to cover general expenses (e.g. payroll, rent); increasing production capacity; developing new products; moving services online marketing; and social distancing accommodations (e.g. the installation of plexiglass barriers).

On August 11, the province announced a new CA\$280,500 investment towards helping the Nookiiwin Tribal Council provide culturally-appropriate training and programs as workers from First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario return to their workplaces (Ontario, 2020eu).

6.4 Other Supports for Individuals

Individuals

On March 16, 2020, proposed legislation was announced that would provide job protection for employees unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19 (Ontario, 2020j). Following this, on March 19, the *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies)* was announced (Ontario, 2020l). The act provides protected leave for employees who are in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19, or those who need to be away from work to care for children or other relatives.

Other supports include an announcement by the provincial government on March 24, stating that it will be providing electricity rate relief for families, small businesses and farms paying time-of-use (TOU) rates (Ontario, 2020v). This measure included suspending TOU rates by holding prices at the off-peak rate, while more residents were working and learning from home. On May 30, the province introduced the COVID-19 Recovery Rate ensuring fixed electricity rates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week until October 31, 2020 (Ontario, 2020bz).

On March 31, the Government of Ontario announced that it would be deferring payments for Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) loans, allowing students to be subject to a six-month interest free moratorium until September 30 (Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 2020).

On July 16, the provincial government announced it would be extending the expiry period for most marriage licenses that had not been used during the pandemic – given the province’s gathering restrictions, many couples had postponed their previously planned weddings (Ontario, 2020du). The change, an amendment to the Marriage Act, would reduce the financial and administrative burdens on couples who had previously planned to marry during the pandemic by extending their licenses by a 24-month period from the end of the provincial state of emergency.

On July 22, the *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020* was passed, which amended the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*, the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, and the *Building Code Act, 1992*, and repealed the *Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act* (Ontario, 2020dz). Among the many changes included legislation specific to evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid).

On July 31, the provincial government announced it would be extending the CECRA program, in partnership with the federal government, by one month (Ontario, 2020en). CECRA was introduced on April 24, by the federal government, to provide rent relief for small businesses experiencing financial hardships due to the pandemic.

On September 17, Ontario introduced new legislation, *Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act*, which would provide a residential rent freeze in 2021 for most rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled residential units (Ontario, 2020gd).

On October 19, the province introduced *Ontario Onwards: Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan for a People-Focused Government*, which included over 30 projects aiming to make public sector services more convenient, reliable and accessible during the pandemic and beyond (Ontario, 2020hr). A number of these projects were focused on increasing the digitalization and simplifying the processes for accessing services. For example, on November 26, the province announced it was launching a new, user-friendly online application protocol to streamline the application process for its social assistance programs (Ontario, 2020jk); in addition to automating some aspects of the application process, such as eligibility assessment,

the new program would also reduce the need for certain aspects of the application to be completed in-person.

On December 9, the province announced several changes which would simplify the process for renewing Ontario driver's licences – and reduce the need for in-person activities (Ontario, 2020ke). For example, seniors aged 80 and older would be permitted to renew their licences without completing the mandatory Group Education Session and drivers who would normally be required to visit a ServiceOntario centre in-person to update their licence photo could renew online using their current photo (ibid). In March, the province announced the temporary extended validity of driver, vehicle and carrier products, including licences and licence plate stickers, that would have expired on or after March 1, 2020 until further notice (ibid).

Parents and children

On March 20, 2020, the provincial government announced the new Learn at Home platform (Ontario, 2020m). The online resource provides math and literacy resources in French and English for kindergarten to grade 12 students. On March 31, another announcement stated that online learning support would also be available to post-secondary students, including for year-end exams (Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 2020).

On April 17, the government announced they would be partnering with Rogers Communications, a major Canadian telecommunications company, and Apple to help meet the educational needs of students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministry of Education, 2020c). The partnership includes over 21,000 iPad devices being purchased and distributed by Ontario school boards, equipped with free Rogers LTE wireless data, to students without access to such a device. In addition to offering free technical support to teachers and students, Apple is also providing videos, apps and books to help teachers build engaging lessons for students and offering teachers free-one-to-one virtual coaching (Ministry of Education, 2020c). Rogers is also working with Ontario school boards to provide high-speed, low-cost internet, at a cost of CA\$9.99 + taxes per month, to eligible tenants and members of subsidized housing partners across Ontario through the Connected for Success program (Ministry of Education, 2020c)

Additionally, on April 6, the provincial government announced direct financial support to parents while Ontario schools and child care centres remain closed (Ontario, 2020ag). The Support for Families initiative gives families CA\$200 per child 0 to 12 years of age and CA\$250 per child 0 to 21 years of age with special needs (Ontario, 2020ag). On April 10, the government announced additional steps to support parents during the COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily preventing child care centres from collecting payments from parents, while also ensuring that their child care spaces are protected (Ministry of Education, 2020b). This means that parents cannot lose their child care space because they are not paying fees during this period. On April 16, the government announced they would be enabling auto insurance companies to provide temporary insurance premium rebates to drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic by amending regulations under the Insurance Act (Ministry of Finance, 2020b). The government has also committed to investing CA\$12 million in emergency funding to expand online and virtual mental health supports (MOH, 2020p).

The Government of Ontario has also committed to helping parents as they return to work by ensuring they have access to child care services. Supports include assisting with fixed operating costs for eligible

child care centres while providers are prohibited from charging parent fees, directing funding delivery through municipal service managers and implementing a straightforward application process for child care centres that do not currently receive provincial funding by allowing them to apply directly to the Ministry of Education. These measures also require all child care centres to maximize supports available through the Economic Response Plan; waive child care licensing applications, renewals and revision fees; extend child care licenses set to expire during the emergency period; protect existing base funding for licensed home child care agencies and regular funding; and provide funding for licensed home child care providers who have remained active during the emergency pandemic closure (Ministry of Education, 2020e).

On June 4, the province announced the creation of the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity, which would advise the provincial government on the challenges facing youth, particularly during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ch). The announcement also included the allocation of CA\$1.5M in funding to support local organizations supporting Black families and youth, including urgent needs resulting from the pandemic (ibid).

On June 19, the government of Ontario announced a historic CA\$736M investment in public education, to support a safe return for the 2020-2021 school year – the province's largest ever investment in public education (Ontario, 2020cw). The funding came as a part of the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) program, the mechanism through which the Ministry of Education provides its annual operating funds to the province's 72 school boards, and brought the total funding for the 2020-2021 school year to CA\$25.5B. Of this, a CA\$213M was dedicated to the student-centric Supports for Students Fund (SSF), which would specifically support special education, mental health and well-being, language instruction, Indigenous education, and STEM programming for Ontario's public schools (ibid). The government also approved the use of SSF funds to support critical staffing needs, such as the hiring of additional custodians and education assistants. With this announcement, the Ontario government is also announced that they would be providing funding for the Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF), allowing school boards and dedicated third parties to provide other critical curricular, extra-curricular, and wrap-around student supports. For the 2020-2021 school year, the PPF is projected to provide over CA\$300M in funding to approximately 150 initiatives (ibid). An additional CA\$4M new funding was announced to support enhanced cleaning measures (Ontario, 2020cx).

On June 25, the Ontario government announced a new investment of over CA\$13M, through the 2020 Youth Opportunities Fund, to support community-driven, youth-led projects aiming to improve the well-being of children and youth aged 12-25 years, and their families, facing economic and social barriers (Ontario, 2020da). One example of these initiatives is the Black Moms Connection, which supports economic empowerment for Black mothers across the Greater Toronto Area (ibid).

To support the implementation of the enhanced public health measures outlined in the province's back to school plan, the Government of Ontario has provided nearly CA\$900M, since August 13, in targeted, immediate, and evidence-informed investments, including (Ontario, 2020ej):

- CA\$60 million towards procuring masks for students and staff, particularly those in financial need;
- CA\$30 million for teacher staffing;
- CA\$50 million to hire up to 500 additional school-based public health nurses;
- Over CA\$23 million to increase testing capacity;

- CA\$75 million to hire over 900 additional custodians and purchase additional cleaning supplies;
- CA\$40 million for school bus cleaning measures;
- CA\$10 million for health and safety training for occasional teachers;
- CA\$10 million to support the special needs of students in the classroom; and
- CA\$10 million to support student mental health. This funding is in addition to the province's earlier CA\$25 million investment, on June 18, in mental health and technology CA\$10M towards mental health supports, including the hiring of over 180 mental health workers in secondary schools, and CA\$15M towards procuring over 35,000 devices to support online learning.

On August 26, the federal government announced new funding to support back-to-school plans across the country; Ontario would receive CA\$381M of this investment, on top of the province's existing CA\$900M investment in its back-to-school plan (Ontario, 2020fj). The federal funding would be allocated towards supporting implementation of the province's reopening plan (CA\$200M), student transportation (CA\$70M), special education and mental health supports (CA\$12.5M), additional public health nurses (CA\$12.5M), remote learning (CA\$36M), and the remainder (CA\$50M) would be set aside by the province to support any future pandemic learning needs that might arise during the fall (ibid).

On August 26, less than two weeks before the planned start of the 2020-2021 school year, the province released *Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools*, a guidance document outlining specific measures for ensuring the safe reopening of schools across the province (Ontario, 2020fl). Examples of guidance provided in the document include protocols for handling students known to have COVID-19 (e.g., quarantine); communication processes for alerting parents if a student or staff become sick with COVID-19; and plans to perform sentinel testing in schools.

On September 3, the provincial government announced a new investment of nearly CA\$147M in early learning and child care for the 2020-21 fiscal year (Ontario, 2020fo). This funding to the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCC) was in addition to the CA\$234.6M being provided through the province's Safe Restart Agreement to support measures to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid).

On October 5, the province announced it would be investing an additional CA\$35M in schools in hotspot areas (i.e., Toronto, Peel, Ottawa and York regions), to hire 350-450 new teachers, 600 new custodians, and purchase 70,000 new technological devices to support online learning (Ontario, 2020gx).

On November 13, the Minister of Education announced a 3-year CA\$17M investment to support First Nations, Metis, Inuit and urban Indigenous education partners across the province (Ontario, 2020is). Specifically, the funding would support in-person, remote and alternate learning options, as well as land-based and Elder programming for students. The province also reassured its partners that throughout the pandemic adequate PPE for students and school staff would be provided to First Nations schools, by the province, at no cost to them (ibid).

On November 26, the Government of Ontario announced C\$13.6M in funding to school boards in Red – Control level regions to hire more teachers and staff, such as custodians, and alleviate any budget shortfalls, i.e., as a consequence of decreased enrollment as a result of the pandemic (Ontario, 2020jl). This included Durham, Halton, Hamilton, and Waterloo regions. The funding was delivered as part of the province's CA\$1.3B back to school plan. The province also announced the launch of a new online platform with high quality remote learning resources, developed in partnership with TVO and TFO (two publicly funded educational television channels, the latter being a French language channel (ibid). In addition to

these online resources, targeting students in Grades 1-8, the province would also be offering a health and safety wellness refreshing lesson to all students on their first day back to school in January 2021.

On November 30, the Government of Ontario announced CA\$380M in new funding to provide financial relief for educational-related expenses due to COVID-19 incurred by parents, such as technological devices (Ontario, 2020jt). The funding, delivered as part of *Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*, would provide CA\$200 per child aged 0-12 years and CA\$250 per child aged 0-21 with special needs.

On December 11, the Government of Ontario announced a CA\$50M investment in virtual learning and educational technologies for post-secondary education (Ontario, 2020d). The investment came as part of the province's new Virtual Learning Strategy, one of over 30 projects funded through *Ontario Onwards: Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan for a People-Focused Government* (ibid).

On December 18, the province announced it would be doubling its original funding for the Black Youth Action Plan (originally announced on 2018), bringing the total three-year investment to CA\$60M (Ontario, 2020lf). The additional funding, part of the 2020 Budget, would support a new economic empowerment programming stream and a dedicated CA\$2.25M in targeted supports for Black families and communities recover from the disproportionate effects of the pandemic (ibid).

On December 21, in response to the province-wide shutdown and increasing number of outbreaks in schools, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (EFTO) called upon province to take a stricter approach to reopening schools in January (EFTO, 2020). In their letter, the EFTO stated that "elementary students, educators and their families continue to be overlooked and put at unnecessary risk during the COVID-19 pandemic" (ibid); they called upon the province to increase access to COVID-19 testing, isolation supports and reduce class sizes, among other measures. Other provinces had announced modified winter schedules in the weeks prior, including plans for remote learning in the weeks before and/or after the winter holidays (ibid); while similar plans were reportedly considered by Ontario's Minister of Education, the ministry decided to not close schools before the break. As of December 17, 22 schools in Ontario were closed for in-person classes as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks, including all schools in the Windsor-Essex Region (Rodrigues, 2020); further, multiple elementary schools decided to move the last 2-3 days of classes before the winter holiday online as a result of rising case numbers (ibid).

Travelers

To date, there are no provincial supports specifically targeting travels. Effective December 11, 2020, individuals requesting a COVID-19 diagnostic test for the purposes of international travel clearance have no longer been eligible for a publicly funded COVID-19 test in Ontario (Ontario, 2020ko).

As mentioned elsewhere, several regions operate quarantine hotels; inbound international travelers would be eligible to use these voluntary facilities.

Vulnerable populations

Multiple measures supporting individual Ontarians were announced in the province's *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19* on March 25, 2020 (Ontario, 2020s). This included helping families pay for extra costs associated with school and daycare closures, proposing to double Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS) payment for low-income seniors for six months, providing CA\$9 million in direct support to families for their energy bills by expanding eligibility for the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), and expanding access to the emergency assistance program administered by Ontario Works, the

province's primary financial support program for low-income residents without disabilities, to provide financial support to people facing economic hardship (Ontario, 2020s). Additional support of CA\$26 million was also announced for Indigenous peoples and communities, including emergency assistance for urban Indigenous people in financial need, and costs for health care professionals and critical supplies to reach remote First Nations communities in Ontario (Ontario, 2020s).

Additional investments to support vulnerable populations include an CA\$200 million investment, announced March 23, in social service relief funding to support municipalities and social service providers, including shelters, food banks, emergency services, charities, and non-profits (Ontario, 2020q). As well, on March 30, the provincial government announced that it would be investing CA\$10 million to help community organizations deliver subsidized meals, medicines and other necessities to seniors, doubling what was initially set out in *Ontario's Action Plan* (Ontario, 2020z).

On April 2, the government announced an additional emergency payment of more than CA\$2.7 million to support services for victims of domestic violence and other violent crimes during the COVID-19 crisis (Ministry of the Attorney General, 2020). This investment aims to help more than 50 community agencies across the province.

On April 4, the government announced the COVID-19 Residential Relief Fund to support costs in facilities that provide residential services for children and youth, people with developmental disabilities, and emergency shelters for women and families fleeing domestic violence (Ministry of Children and Family, 2020). On April 6, the government announced relief for remote Northern Property Taxpayers by deferring CA\$15 million in property taxes for people and businesses in parts of Northern Ontario located outside of municipal boundaries (Ministry of Finance, 2020a).

Further on April 21, the provincial government announced an additional CA\$11 million investment to help deliver meals, medicines and other essential to those in need (Ontario, 2020au). On September 24, it was announced that this program, the *Ontario Community Support Program*, would continue until at least March 2021 (Ontario, 2020gj); thereby ensuring low-income seniors and people with disabilities, particularly those quarantining or otherwise limiting their trips outside their home during the pandemic, can continue to have meals and other essential supplies delivered to their homes during the winter months.

Also on April 21, the government announced they would be doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS) payments, which are provided to qualifying low-income seniors in Ontario, for a six-month period (Ontario, 2020au). On May 30, the provincial government also announced that amendments to the *Retirement Home Act*, which would increase the emergency payment amount that the Retirement Home Regulatory Authority can pay to eligible retirement homes from CA\$2,000 to CA\$3,500 care (Ontario, 2020ca). This funding can be used to support residents to cover costs for transportation, alternative accommodation or temporary care (Ontario, 2020ca).

On June 26, the Government of Ontario announced CA\$4M in new funding as part of its Seniors Community Grant Program (Ontario, 2020db). The aim of the funding, to be administered through grants between CA\$1,000 and CA\$100,000, is to help non-profit organizations, local services boards, and Indigenous groups develop programs for seniors focused on combatting social isolation (e.g. opportunities for employment and volunteering), promoting safety and well-being, improving financial security (e.g.

fraud awareness) and making communities more age friendly. The province also provided CA\$467,500 in financial support, on September 18, to the *Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario* (OACAO), to administer microgrants supporting seniors' organizations in delivery telephone-based services to reduce social isolation (Ontario, 2020ge).

On July 2, the Government of Ontario announced CA\$150M in new funding to support enhanced COVID-19 measures in homeless shelters, including funds to purchase new facilities to support physical distancing, and create opportunities for longer term housing. The investment more than doubled currently to local municipal service managers and urban Indigenous program administrators through the Social Services Relief Fund (Ontario, 2020df). Under the Safe Restart Agreement, the Government of Ontario provided an additional CA\$212M through the Social Services Relief Fund to support municipal services and Indigenous housing partners, bringing the total provincial funding for this program to CA\$510M and building on the government's *COVID-19 Action Plan to Protect Vulnerable Ontarians* (Ontario, 2020ex).

On July 9, the *Improving Connectivity for Ontario* (ICON) program was launched. As part of the province's CA\$315M *Up to Speed: Ontario's Broadband and Cellular Action Plan*, the Government of Ontario dedicated a CA\$150M investment towards expanding access to reliable broadband and cellular services in un- and under-served parts of the province (Ontario, 2020dp).

Throughout the pandemic, various affordable housing initiatives were introduced by the Government of Ontario. For example, on July 28, a CA\$4.2M investment, through the joint provincial and federal Social Infrastructure Fund, was announced for the creation of affordable housing for seniors at risk of homelessness in York Region (Ontario, 2020ee). On July 29, the province announced an investment of over CA\$2.2M to support the development of affordable housing options for residents of Niagara Region at risk of experiencing homelessness (Ontario, 2020eh). As stated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, "Communities across the province are facing housing challenges, which have been heightened by COVID-19... we are supporting innovative approaches so that our most vulnerable can safely move into housing with crucial support services" (ibid). As part of the Community Housing Renewal Strategy, the Government of Ontario committed to investing almost CA\$1B over 2020-21 to support community housing and help end homelessness in Ontario (Ontario, 2020ee).

To support the further economic recovery of economically vulnerable persons across Ontario, on September 30, the provincial government announced plans to build a more responsive, efficient and person-centred social assistance system (Ontario, 2020gs). Specially, the plan would provide enhanced access to employment and training opportunities, accelerate the digital delivery of services and tools, and centralize and automate service delivery.

On October 23, the Government of Ontario announced a new investment of CA\$5M to create the new Surplus Food Redistribution Infrastructure Program. The program would support food rescue, First Nation and Indigenous organizations in purchasing refrigeration, storage and kitchen equipment to support the safe collection, preservation and distribution of unused, high quality surplus foods, e.g. from grocery stores and restaurants, to those in need during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020hy). The announcement came in response to many areas in the province moving to a modified Stage 2, which prohibited indoor dining and led to a surplus of food at restaurants.

On October 28, the province announced it would be providing municipalities and Indigenous communities across the province with over CA\$241M in funding to support those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness (Ontario, 2020ib). The funds, delivered through the Social Services Relief Fund, would support homeless shelters, the creation and renovation of more than 1,500 housing units and the expansion of existing rent support programs.

On November 9, the province announced a two-year investment of CA\$2M, through its Inclusive Community Grants, to support inclusive activities and programming of Ontarians of all ages and abilities; specifically, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility noted that these grants would help ensure seniors and persons with disabilities stay “safe, active and socially connected, especially during COVID-19” (Ontario, 2020ip).

On December 10, the province announced an investment of over CA\$147M towards supportive housing for Ontarians with severe mental health and addictions concerns who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness (Ontario, 2020kj). The funding, part of the province’s CA\$176M investment outlined in its *Roadmap to Wellness*, would also support the creation of a new *Back to Home* program, which would support the transition from hospitals to permanent housing, and alleviate pressure on hospital beds (ibid).

On December 15, the Government of Ontario announced it would be allocating an additional CA\$120M to support municipalities and Indigenous communities in their efforts to protect the health of vulnerable Ontarians during the pandemic (Ontario, 2020ks). These discretionary funds could be used to support a variety of activities and programs, including homeless shelters, rent banks, preparing for future outbreaks, etc. The investment added to previous installments of the province’s Social Services Relief Fund, which originally launched in March 2020, bringing the total investment in this fund to CA\$510M; the new funding was provided through the province’s CA\$4B Safe Restart Agreement (ibid).

On December 16, the province announced its new five-year poverty reduction strategy, *Building a Strong Foundation for Success: Reducing Poverty in Ontario*, which focused on the province’s post COVID-19 recovery (Ontario, 2020ky). Specifically, the strategy outlines several initiatives which will connect people experiencing poverty with education, skills training, health and other supports (ibid). Notably, the strategy also outlines targeted initiatives to support Indigenous prosperity, developed in consultation with Indigenous partners and communities (ibid).

References

- Allen, K. (2020, December 15). *A secret location, three meals a day, free Wi-Fi ... but Toronto's isolation hotel has been short on one thing: COVID patients*. Toronto.Com. <https://www.toronto.com/news-story/10289871-a-secret-location-three-meals-a-day-free-wi-fi-but-toronto-s-isolation-hotel-has-been-short-on-one-thing-covid-patients/>
- Angus, H., Anderson, M., & Steele, R. (2020). *Transfer of Hospital Patients and Community Clients to Long-Term Care Homes*. Ministry of Health. <https://www.orcaretirement.com/wp-content/uploads/MOH-MLTC-OH-Memo-re-Transfer-of-Hospital-Patients-and-Community-Clients-....pdf>
- Bhattacharyya, O., & Agarwal, P. (2020). Adapting Primary Care to Respond to COVID-19. *Canadian Family Physician*. <https://www.cfp.ca/news/2020/04/09/04-09-1>
- Bogdan, S. (2020, April 7). Coronavirus: London Health Services Centre COVID-19 field hospital will finished by end of week. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6790598/corovirus-lhsc-covid-19-field-hospital/>
- Canada. (2020a, May 14). *Canada and Ontario Take Steps to Further Protect Farm Workers* [News releases]. Gcnws. <https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2020/05/canada-and-ontario-take-steps-to-further-protect-farm-workers.html>
- Canada. (2020b, October 2). *Government introduces new border measures to protect Canadian public health, provides update on travel restrictions* [News releases]. Gcnws. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2020/10/government-introduces-new-border-measures-to-protect-canadian-public-health-provides-update-on-travel-restrictions.html>
- Canada, P. H. A. of. (2020c, November 26). *Government of Canada Announces Funding for New COVID-19 Safe Voluntary Isolation Centre in Peel, Ontario* [News releases]. Gcnws. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2020/11/government-of-canada-announces-funding-for-new-covid-19-safe-voluntary-isolation-centre-in-peel-ontario.html>
- Carter, A. (2020, May 8). *Ontario Premier Doug Ford briefly visited cottage after asking residents not to* / *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ford-cottage-covid-19-coronavirus-1.5561167>
- CBC News. (2020a, March 13). *GO Transit reduces services, universities close: What you need to know about COVID-19 in Ontario*. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/coronavirus-covid-19-panic-buying-stockpiling-1.5496381>
- CBC News. (2020b, April 14). *Tweet from CBC Toronto*. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/CBCToronto/status/1250133789751365639>
- CBC News. (2020c, December 21). *Ford orders lockdown for all of Ontario starting Boxing Day*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-19-ontario-december-21-lockdown-orders-1.5849760>
- CBC News & 2020. (2020, June 25). *Ontario won't make masks mandatory as province sees 189 new cases* / *CBC News*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-19-coronavirus-ontario-june-25-update-1.5626609>
- Chidley-Hill, J. (2020, December 12). *Mobile COVID-19 testing sites in Toronto a success, city says* / *CBC News*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-toronto-mobile-testing-1.5839065>

- CMOH. (2020). *COVID-19 Updates: Visitors at Acute Care Settings*.
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/memos/CMOH_Memo_Hospital_Visitors_Acute_Settings%20_COVID-19_March_19_2020.pdf
- Correctional Services Canada. (2020, March 11). *Update on Coronavirus Disease*. Government of Canada.
<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/001/006/001006-1003-en.shtml>
- Crawley, M. (2020a, January 22). How Ontario's "hallway medicine" problem has become an everyday reality. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-hospital-hallway-medicine-healthcare-beyond-capacity-1.5420434>
- Crawley, M. (2020b, June 1). *Hospitals failed to flag 700 positive COVID-19 tests to Ontario's public health units* | *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-19-ontario-hospitals-missed-telling-public-health-confirmed-cases-1.5593572>
- Cressy, J. (2020, April 22). *Toronto Taking the Lead on Collection of Race-Based Data for COVID-19*. Councillor Joe Cressy - Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York.
http://www.joecressy.com/toronto_taking_the_lead_on_collection_of_race_based_data_for_covid_19
- Davidson, S. (2020, December 21). *Ontario lockdown: Province will enter strict shutdown on Dec. 26, nearly all non-essential businesses to close*. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-will-enter-strict-lockdown-on-dec-26-nearly-all-non-essential-businesses-to-close-1.5239810?cache=>
- de la Vega. (2020, December 24). Muskoka paramedics piloting new COVID-19 rapid response test. *Huntsville Doppler*. <https://doppleronline.ca/huntsville/muskoka-paramedics-piloting-new-covid-19-rapid-response-test/>
- DeClerq, K. (2020a, April 14). Ontario restricts long-term care home workers to one facility amid COVID-19 pandemic. *CTV News*. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-restricts-long-term-care-home-workers-to-one-facility-amid-covid-19-pandemic-1.4895852>
- DeClerq, K. (2020b, December 18). *At least 57 positive COVID-19 cases found in Ontario schools through asymptomatic testing*. Toronto. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/at-least-57-positive-covid-19-cases-found-in-ontario-schools-through-asymptomatic-testing-1.5237131>
- D'Mello, C. (2020a, March 20). Telehealth Ontario adds 1,300 lines to accommodate COVID-19 concerns. *CTV News*. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/telehealth-ontario-adds-1-300-lines-to-accomodate-covid-19-concerns-1.4859682?cache=kcfnyoei%3FautoPlay%3Dtrue%3FautoPlay%3Dtrue%3FautoPlay%3Dtrue%3FcontactForm%3Dtrue%3FautoPlay%3Dtrue>
- D'Mello, C. (2020b, May 5). *Ontario's top doctor won't ban people from cottages despite county warning of \$5,000 fine*. Toronto. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-s-top-doctor-won-t-ban-people-from-cottages-despite-county-warning-of-5-000-fine-1.4925782>
- Dunham, J. (2020, March 14). Ontario limits who can be tested for COVID-19 due to demand for nasal swabs. *CTV News*. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/ontario-limits-who-can-be-tested-for-covid-19-due-to-demand-for-nasal-swabs-1.4853260>
- ETFO. (2020, December 21). *Plans to reopen schools during province-wide lockdown fail to protect elementary students and educators*.
<https://www.etfo.ca/AboutETFO/MediaRoom/MediaReleases/Pages/Plans%20to%20reopen%20schools%20during%20province->

- wide%20lockdown%20fail%20%20to%20protect%20elementary%20students%20and%20educators.aspx
- EOHU. (2020, March 20). *Community Paramedic Program Conducting In-Home COVID-19 Testing for Higher-Risk Individuals—Eastern Ontario Health Unit*. EOHU | Public Health. <https://eohu.ca/en/article/2020-03-20>
- Ferreira, J. (2020, April 7). *Why declaring the Easter Bunny “essential” during a pandemic can help kids cope* | CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/why-declaring-the-easter-bunny-essential-during-a-pandemic-can-help-kids-cope-1.4887170>
- Find local CMHA services during COVID-19*. (2020, April 23). Canadian Mental Health Association. <https://ontario.cmha.ca/news/find-local-cmha-services-during-covid-19/>
- Fox, C. (2020, April 29). *Ontario expands list of workers eligible for “pandemic pay.”* CTV News. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-expands-list-of-workers-eligible-for-pandemic-pay-1.4916617>
- Freeman, J. (2020, July 2). *Head of Public Health Ontario announces he’s stepping down permanently*. Toronto. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/head-of-public-health-ontario-announces-he-s-stepping-down-permanently-1.5008351>
- Gatehouse, J. (2020, June 9). *Ontario’s Doug Ford says he relies on COVID-19 experts, but his government won’t identify them*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ford-experts-covid-1.5603327>
- Government of Ontario. (2020, July 15). *Ontario Accelerating the Development of Long-Term Care Homes*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/07/ontario-accelerating-the-development-of-long-term-care-homes.html>
- Guelph. (2020, June 10). *City supports Section 22 order from Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health*. City of Guelph. <https://guelph.ca/2020/06/city-supports-section-22-order-from-wellington-dufferin-guelph-public-health/>
- Health Quality Ontario. (2018). *Measuring Up 2018: A yearly report on how Ontario’s health system is performing*. 80.
- Herhalt, C. (2020, October 23). *Ontario labs can process 50,000 COVID-19 tests a day. Why aren’t they?* | CTV News. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-labs-can-process-50-000-covid-19-tests-a-day-why-aren-t-they-1.5157996>
- Humphreys, A. (2020, May 16). *Controversial health order banning cottage travel in Ontario counties yanked in time for long weekend*. *National Post*. <https://nationalpost.com/news/controversial-health-order-banning-cottage-travel-in-ontario-counties-yanked-in-time-for-long-weekend>
- ICES. (2020). *ICES COVID-19 Dashboard*. <https://www.ices.on.ca/DAS/AHRQ/COVID-19-Dashboard>
- Jones, A. (2020a, March 11). *Ontario reports more cases of COVID-19, announces \$100M contingency fund* | CBC News. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-41-cases-covid-19-1.5493715>
- Jones, A. (2020b, March 31). *Premier Doug Ford warns medical supply shortage may loom with surge in COVID-19 cases*. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6755143/premier-doug-ford-warns-medical-supply-shortage-surge-covid-19-coronavirus/>

- Kester, S. (2020, July 22). *Social bubble confusion contributing to increase in COVID-19 cases* | CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/social-bubble-messaging-lost-epidemiologist-says-1.5658155>
- Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. (2020a, April 3). *Ontario Protecting Seniors in Retirement Homes During COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/oss/en/2020/04/ontario-protecting-seniors-in-retirement-homes-during-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. (2020b, April 9). *Ontario Creates Partnership with Volunteer Hub to Help Seniors*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/oss/en/2020/04/ontario-creates-partnership-with-volunteer-hub-to-help-seniors.html>
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. (2020a, April 4). *Ontario Takes Steps to Keep Food on the Table during COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/omafra/en/2020/04/ontario-takes-steps-to-keep-food-on-the-table-during-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. (2020b, April 17). *Canada and Ontario Supporting Agri-food Sector Supply Chain During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/omafra/en/2020/04/canada-and-ontario-supporting-agri-food-sector-supply-chain-during-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Children and Family. (2020, April 4). *Ontario Protecting Vulnerable Ontarians During COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2020/04/ontario-protecting-vulnerable-ontarians-during-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ministry of Colleges and Universities. (2020, March 31). *Province Supports Postsecondary Students During COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2020/03/province-supports-postsecondary-students-during-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Economic Development. (2020a, May 6). *Ontario Funds Innovative Company to Help Fight COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2020/05/ontario-funds-innovative-company-to-help-fight-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Economic Development. (2020b, May 6). *Ontario Funds Innovative Company to Help Fight COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2020/05/ontario-funds-innovative-company-to-help-fight-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2020a, March 22). *Province Takes Steps to Ensure Frontline Staff Can Continue to Work*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/03/province-takes-steps-to-ensure-frontline-staff-can-continue-to-work.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2020b, April 10). *Ontario Protects Parents during COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/04/ontario-taking-action-to-support-parents-during-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2020c, April 17). *Ontario Establishes Key Partnerships to Make Home Learning More Accessible*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/04/ontario-establishes-key-partnerships-to-make-home-learning-more-accessible.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2020d, April 26). *School Closures Extended to Keep Students, Staff and Families Safe*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/04/school-closures-extended-to-keep-students-staff-and-families-safe.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2020e, May 9). *Ontario Government Supporting Parents as Economy Reopens*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/05/ontario-government-supporting-parents-as-economy-reopens.html>

- Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. (2020, April 25). *Newsroom: Ontario Parks to Remain Closed until May 31, 2020*. <https://www.news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2020/04/ontario-parks-to-remain-closed-until-may-31-2020.html>
- Ministry of Finance. (2020a, April 6). *Ontario Providing Relief for Remote Northern Property Taxpayers During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2020/04/ontario-providing-relief-for-remote-northern-property-taxpayers-during-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Finance. (2020b, April 16). *Ontario Enables Auto Insurance Companies to Provide Driver Rebates During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2020/04/ontario-enables-auto-insurance-companies-to-provide-driver-rebates-during-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. (2020, March 28). *Ontario Protecting Supply Chains To Support COVID-19 Emergency Response*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mgs/en/2020/03/ontario-protecting-supply-chains-to-support-covid-19-emergency-response.html>
- Ministry of Health. (2020, March 15). *Ontario Hospitals Asked to Take a Planned Approach to Ramping Down Elective Surgeries*. Ontario Newsroom. https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/ontario-hospitals-asked-to-take-a-planned-approach-to-ramping-down-elective-surgeries.html?utm_source=ondemand&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=p
- Ministry of Heritage. (2020, March 13). *Statement from Minister Elliott and Minister MacLeod on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2020/03/statement-from-minister-elliott-and-minister-macleod-on-the-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. (2020, April 7). *Ontario Helping Indigenous Communities Stop the Spread of COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mirr/en/2020/04/ontario-helping-indigenous-communities-stop-the-spread-of-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Labour. (2020, March 26). *UPDATED: Ontario Enabling Financial Relief for Businesses*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2020/03/ontario-enabling-financial-relief-for-businesses-1.html>
- Ministry of Solicitor General. (2020a, March 13). *Statement from Minister Elliott and Solicitor General Jones regarding Ontario's adult correctional facilities in response to COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mcscs/en/2020/03/statement-from-minister-elliott-and-solicitor-general-jones-regarding-ontarios-adult-correctional-fac.html>
- Ministry of Solicitor General. (2020b, March 20). *Ontario Stepping Up Measures to Limit the Spread of COVID-19 in Correctional System*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mcscs/en/2020/03/ontario-stepping-up-measures-to-limit-the-spread-of-covid-19-in-correctional-system.html>
- Ministry of the Attorney General. (2020, April 2). *Ontario Strengthening Victim Services in Response to COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mag/en/2020/04/ontario-strengthening-victims-services-in-response-to-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of the Environment. (2020a, March 15). *Statement from Minister Elliott and Minister Yurek Related to Ontario Parks Operations in Response to COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2020/03/statement-from-minister-elliott-and-minister-yurek-related-to-ontario-parks-operations-in-response-t.html>

- Ministry of the Environment. (2020b, March 18). *Update on Ontario Parks Operations in Response to COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2020/03/ontario-update-on-ontario-parks-operations-in-response-to-covid-19.html>
- Ministry of Transportation. (2020a, March 19). *Ontario Extending Validation Periods for Driver, Vehicle and Carrier Products, Services and Health Cards*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mto/en/2020/03/ontario-extending-validation-periods-for-driver-vehicle-and-carrier-products-services-and-health-car.html>
- Ministry of Transportation. (2020b, March 22). *Closure of Drive Test Centres In Response to COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mto/en/2020/03/closure-of-drive-test-centres-in-response-to-covid-19.html>
- MLTC. (n.d.). *Questions and Answers—Ontario Health Insurance Plan—Ministry Programs—Public Information—MOHLTC*. Government of Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Retrieved October 29, 2020, from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/ohip/ohipfaq_mn.aspx
- MLTC. (2020a, March 11). *Ontario Enhancing COVID-19 Protections for Long-Term Care Residents, Families and Staff*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/03/ontario-enhancing-covid-19-protections-for-long-term-care-residents-families-and-staff.html>
- MLTC. (2020b, March 16). *Ontario Committed to Protecting Long-Term Care Residents, Families and Staff*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/03/ontario-committed-to-protecting-long-term-care-residents-families-and-staff.html>
- MLTC. (2020c, March 24). *Ontario Implements Enhanced Measures to Protect the Safety of Residents in Long-Term Care Homes*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/03/ontario-implements-enhanced-measures-to-protect-the-safety-of-residents-in-long-term-care-homes.html>
- MLTC. (2020d, March 28). *Ontario Taking Emergency Measures to Support Long-Term Care Homes During COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/03/ontario-taking-further-action-through-emergency-measures-to-support-long-term-care-homes-during-covi.html>
- MOH. (2020a). *COVID-19 Guidance: Information on the Use of N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators Beyond the Manufacturer-designated Shelf Life*. 5.
- MOH. (2020b, March 12). *CORRECTION: Province Implementing Enhanced Measures to Protect Ontarians from COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/correction-province-implementing-enhanced-measures-to-protect-ontarians-from-covid-19.html>
- MOH. (2020c, March 16). *Enhanced Measures to Protect Ontarians from COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/enhanced-measures-to-protect-ontarians-from-covid-19.html>
- MOH. (2020d). *COVID-19 Guidance for Food Premises—Best Practices Summary Sheet*. 4.
- MOH. (2020e). *COVID-19 Guidance: Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting*. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_primary_care_guidance.pdf
- MOH. (2020f, March 20). *Ontario Expands Coverage for Care*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/ontario-expands-coverage-for-care.html>

- MOH. (2020g). *COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance*. 3.
- MOH. (2020h). *COVID-19 Guidance for Industry Operators*. 7.
- MOH. (2020i). *Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers*. 9.
- MOH. (2020j). *COVID-19 Guidance: Group Homes and Co-Living Settings*. 11.
- MOH. (2020k). *COVID-19 Guidance: Homeless Shelters*. 10.
- MOH. (2020l, April 2). *COVID-19: Guidance for Health Sector*. Ministry of Health and Long Term Care; Government of Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx
- MOH. (2020m, April 3). *Ontario Increasing Public Health Units' Capacity to Stop COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/04/ontario-increasing-public-health-units-capacity-to-stop-covid-19.html>
- MOH. (2020n). *COVID-19 Outbreak Guidance for Long-Term Care Homes (LTCH)* (p. 21).
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/LTCH_outbreak_guidance.pdf
- MOH. (2020o). *COVID-19 Outbreak Guidance for LongTerm Care Homes (LTCH)*.
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/LTCH_outbreak_guidance.pdf
- MOH. (2020p, May 4). *Ontario Continues to Support Mental Health Needs During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/05/ontario-continues-to-support-mental-health-needs-during-covid-19.html>
- Office of the Premier. (2020a, April 8). *Ontario Accelerates Essential Construction Projects During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-accelerates-essential-construction-projects-during-covid-19.html>
- Office of the Premier. (2020b, April 23). *Ontario Delivers Action Plan to Increase Protection for Vulnerable People and Those Who Care for Them*. News.Ontario.Ca.
<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-delivers-action-plan-to-increase-protection-for-vulnerable-people-and-those-who-care-for-the.html>
- Office of the Premier. (2020c, April 30). *Ontario Providing Employers with Workplace Safety Guidelines*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-providing-employers-with-workplace-safety-guidelines.html>
- OHA. (2019, December). *Ontario Hospitals-Leaders in Efficiency*.
<https://www.oha.com/Documents/Ontario%20Hospitals%20-%20Leaders%20in%20Efficiency.pdf>
- OHA. (2020, November 20). *Policy Guidance for the Reintegration of Caregivers an Essential Care Partners*.
<https://www.oha.com/Documents/Policy%20Guidance%20for%20the%20Reintegration%20of%20Caregivers%20an%20Essential%20Care%20Partners%20November%202020.pdf>
- OMA. (2020). *Virtual Care: COVID-19 Guide*. 1.
- Ontario. (n.d.-a). *Public Health Units—Health Services in Your Community—MOHLTC*. Government of Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Retrieved June 5, 2020, from <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/default.aspx>

- Ontario. (2019, May 29). *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. Ontario.Ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/view>
- Ontario. (2020a). *Canada Day*. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/canada-day>
- Ontario. (2020b). *COVID-19 regional public health measures and restrictions*. COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in Ontario. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/zones-and-restrictions>
- Ontario. (2020c, Dec). *Governments Improve Food Safety in Ontario's Licensed Meat Plants*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59651/governments-improve-food-safety-in-ontarios-licensed-meat-plants>
- Ontario. (2020d, Dec). *Ontario Invests in Virtual Learning Strategy*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59600/ontario-invests-in-virtual-learning-strategy>
- Ontario. (2020e). *Training Bulletin: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/emergency_health/edu/docs/Training_Bulletin_120_COVID-19_v1.6.pdf
- Ontario. (2020f, January 22). *Ontario Takes Steps to Safeguard the Health of the Public Against the Coronavirus*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/01/statement-by-deputy-premier-and-minister-of-health-christine-elliott.html>
- Ontario. (2020g, January 25). *Ontario Confirms First Case of Wuhan Novel Coronavirus*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/01/ontario-confirms-first-case-of-wuhan-novel-coronavirus.html>
- Ontario. (2020h, March 2). *Ontario Implementing Enhanced Measures to Safeguard Public from COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/ontario-implementing-enhanced-measures-to-safeguard-public-from-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020i, March 9). *Ontario Making it Easier for Public to Stay Informed about COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/ontario-making-it-easier-for-public-to-stay-informed-about-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020j, March 16). *Premier Ford Announces Job Protection for Workers during the COVID-19 Situation*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/premier-ford-announces-job-protection-for-workers-during-the-covid-19-situation.html>
- Ontario. (2020k, March 17). *Ontario Enacts Declaration of Emergency to Protect the Public*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-enacts-declaration-of-emergency-to-protect-the-public.html>
- Ontario. (2020l, March 19). *Ontario Supporting Workers, Municipalities and Retailers in Response to COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-supporting-workers-municipalities-and-retailers-in-response-to-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020m, March 20). *Ontario Helping Students Learn from the Safety of Their Own Home*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-helping-students-learn-from-the-safety-of-their-own-home.html>
- Ontario. (2020n, March 21). *Ontario Takes Extraordinary Steps to Ensure Health Care Resources are Available to Contain COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/ontario-takes-extraordinary-steps-to-ensure-health-care-resources-are-available-to-contain-covid-19.html>

- Ontario. (2020o, March 21). *Ontario Urges Business to Join the Fight Against COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-urges-business-to-join-the-fight-against-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020p, March 23). *Ontario Orders the Mandatory Closure of All Non-Essential Workplaces to Fight Spread of COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-orders-the-mandatory-closure-of-all-non-essential-workplaces-to-fight-spread-of-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020q, March 23). *Ontario Protecting the Most Vulnerable During COVID-19 Crisis*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-protecting-the-most-vulnerable-during-covid-19-crisis.html>
- Ontario. (2020r, March 23). *Ontario Significantly Enhancing COVID-19 Screening Measures and Supports*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/ontario-significantly-enhancing-covid-19-screening-measures-and-supports.html>
- Ontario. (2020s, March 25). *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2020/03/ontarios-action-plan-responding-to-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020t, March 25). *Stop the Spread Business Information Line Now Open at 1-888-444-3659* / Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/56459/stop-the-spread-business-information-line-now-open-at-1-888-444-3659>
- Ontario. (2020u, March 28). *Ontario Prohibits Gatherings of More Than Five People with Strict Exceptions*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-prohibits-gatherings-of-five-people-or-more-with-strict-exceptions.html>
- Ontario. (2020v, March 28). *Ontario Protecting Consumers from Price Gouging*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-protecting-consumers-from-price-gouging.html>
- Ontario. (2020w). *Case Definition – Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. 3.
- Ontario. (2020x, March 30). *Ontario Extends Emergency Declaration to Stop the Spread of COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-extends-emergency-declaration-to-stop-the-spread-of-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020y, March 30). *Ontario Protecting Seniors During the COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-protecting-seniors-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ontario. (2020z, March 30). *Ontario Protecting Seniors During the COVID-19 Outbreak*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-protecting-seniors-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ontario. (2020aa, March 31). *Ontario Extends School and Child Care Closures to Fight Spread of COVID-19*. Ontario Newsroom. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-extends-school-and-child-care-closures-to-fight-spread-of-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020ab, April 1). *Ontario Joins Forces with the Private Sector to Fight COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-joins-forces-with-the-private-sector-to-fight-covid-19.html>

- Ontario. (2020ac, April 2). *Ontario Increasing Mental Health Support During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-increasing-mental-health-support-during-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020ad, April 3). *Apply for OHIP and get a health card*. Ontario.Ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/apply-ohip-and-get-health-card>
- Ontario. (2020ae, April 3). *Ontario Provides Full Transparency by Releasing COVID-19 Modelling*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-provides-full-transparency-by-releasing-covid-19-modelling.html>
- Ontario. (2020af, April 3). *The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Ontario.Ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- Ontario. (2020ag, April 6). *Ontario Government Supports Families in Response to COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-government-supports-families-in-response-to-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020ah, April 9). *Ontario Starts Planning for Economic Recovery*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-starts-planning-for-economic-recovery.html>
- Ontario. (2020ai, April 10). *Ontario Significantly Expanding COVID-19 Testing*. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-significantly-expanding-covid-19-testing.html>
- Ontario. (2020aj, April 11). *Ontario Takes Further Action to Stop the Spread of COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-takes-further-action-to-stop-the-spread-of-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020ak, April 12). *Premier Doug Ford Delivers Easter Greetings*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/56657/premier-doug-ford-delivers-easter-greetings>
- Ontario. (2020al, April 12). *Province Developing New Health Data Platform to Help Defeat COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/04/province-developing-new-health-data-platform-to-help-defeat-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020am, April 13). *Ontario Secures Critical Medical Equipment and Supplies*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-secures-critical-medical-equipment-and-supplies.html>
- Ontario. (2020an, April 14). *Ontario Supporting Education Sector, Students, and Municipalities During COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-supporting-education-sector-students-and-municipalities-during-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ontario. (2020ao, April 15). *Ontario Ramping Up Protection for Long-Term Care Residents*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-ramping-up-protection-for-long-term-care.html>
- Ontario. (2020ap, April 15). *Public health management of cases and contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_PH_Mgmt_guidance.pdf
- Ontario. (2020aq, April 16). *Ontario Significantly Expands Hospital Capacity to Prepare for Any COVID-19 Outbreak Scenario*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-significantly-expands-hospital-capacity-to-prepare-for-any-covid-19-outbreak-scenario.html>

- Ontario. (2020ar, April 17). *Ontario Offers Emergency Child Care to More Frontline Staff*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-offers-emergency-child-care-to-more-frontline-staff.html>
- Ontario. (2020as, April 17). *Ontario Takes Further Action to Protect Vulnerable People from COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-takes-further-action-to-protect-vulnerable-people-from-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020at, April 20). *Health Experts Say the COVID-19 Outbreak Has Likely Peaked in Ontario*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/health-experts-say-the-covid-19-outbreak-has-likely-peaked-in-ontario.html>
- Ontario. (2020au, April 21). *Ontario Providing Additional Relief to the Province's Most Vulnerable*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-providing-additional-relief-to-the-provinces-most-vulnerable.html>
- Ontario. (2020av, April 22). *Ontario Takes Immediate Steps to Further Protect Long-Term Care Residents and Staff During COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-takes-immediate-steps-to-further-protect-long-term-care-residents-and-staff-during-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020aw, April 25). *Ontario Supporting Frontline Heroes of COVID-19 with Pandemic Pay*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-supporting-frontline-heroes-of-covid-19-with-pandemic-pay.html>
- Ontario. (2020ax). *A Framework for Reopening our Province*. 13.
- Ontario. (2020ay, April 28). *Ontario Helping Businesses Overcome the Unique Challenges Created by COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-helping-businesses-overcome-the-unique-challenges-created-by-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020az, April 29). *More Frontline Workers Eligible for Emergency Child Care*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/more-frontline-workers-eligible-for-emergency-child-care.html>
- Ontario. (2020ba, April 30). *Government Launches New Tool to Support Trucking Industry*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mto/en/2020/04/government-launches-new-tool-to-support-trucking-industry.html>
- Ontario. (2020bb, April 30). *Ontario Providing Employers with Workplace Safety Guidelines*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-providing-employers-with-workplace-safety-guidelines.html>
- Ontario. (2020bc, May 1). *Newsroom: Ontario Takes Additional Steps to Improve Health Care Flexibility During COVID-19 Outbreak*. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-takes-additional-steps-to-improve-health-care-flexibility-during-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ontario. (2020bd, May 1). *Ontario Providing Support for Industrial and Commercial Electricity Consumers During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mndmf/en/2020/05/ontario-providing-support-for-industrial-and-commercial-electricity-consumers-during-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020be, May 4). *Ontario Significantly Increases Daily Lab Testing*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-significantly-increases-daily-lab-testing.html>

- Ontario. (2020bf, May 5). *Newsroom: Ontario Expands Virtual Mental Health Services During COVID-19*. <https://www.news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-expands-virtual-mental-health-services-during-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020bg, May 7). *Newsroom: Ontario Releases Plan to Resume Scheduled Surgeries and Procedures*. <https://www.news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-releases-plan-to-resume-scheduled-surgeries-and-procedures.html>
- Ontario. (2020bh, May 9). *Ontario Enables School Board Employees to Be Voluntarily Redeployed to Congregate Care Settings*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-enables-school-board-employees-to-be-voluntarily-redeployed-to-congregate-care-settings.html>
- Ontario. (2020bi, May 13). *Newsroom: Ontario Takes Steps to Better Protect Long-Term Care Residents and Staff During the COVID-19 Outbreak*. <https://www.news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-takes-steps-to-better-protect-long-term-care-residents-and-staff-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ontario. (2020bj, May 13). *Newsroom: Protecting Ontario's Children with COVID-19*. <https://www.news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/05/protecting-ontarios-children-with-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020bk, May 13). *Ontario Making Prescription Drugs More Affordable During COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/05/ontario-making-prescription-drugs-more-affordable-during-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020bl, May 13). *Voluntary Redeployment of Education Workers to Fill Staffing Shortages*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/voluntary-redeployment-of-education-workers-to-fill-staffing-shortages.html>
- Ontario. (2020bm, May 14). *Ontario Announces Additional Workplaces that Can Reopen*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-announces-additional-workplaces-that-can-reopen.html>
- Ontario. (2020bn, May 19). *Health and Safety Top Priority as Schools Remain Closed*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/health-and-safety-top-priority-as-schools-remain-closed.html>
- Ontario. (2020bo, May 19). *Newsroom: Ontario Announces Independent Commission into Long-Term Care*. <https://www.news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/05/ontario-announces-independent-commission-into-long-term-care.html>
- Ontario. (2020bp, May 21). *Ontario Leading COVID-19 Research in Canada*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-leading-covid-19-research-in-canada.html>
- Ontario. (2020bq, May 22). *Ontario Helps People Impacted by COVID-19 Get Back to Work*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-helps-people-impacted-by-covid-19-get-back-to-work.html>
- Ontario. (2020br, May 25). *Hospitals Assume Management of Two Long-Term Care Homes*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/05/hospitals-assume-management-of-two-long-term-care-homes.html>
- Ontario. (2020bs, May 26). *Ontario Takes Immediate Action to Investigate Worst Hit Long-Term Care Homes*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-takes-immediate-action-to-investigate-worst-hit-long-term-care-homes.html>

- Ontario. (2020bt, May 27). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) self-assessment*. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment>
- Ontario. (2020bu, May 27). *Ontario Extending Emergency Orders During COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-extending-emergency-orders-during-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- Ontario. (2020bv, May 28). *Ontario Takes Further Action to Protect Seniors and Staff in Long-Term Care Homes during COVID-19 Outbreak*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-takes-further-action-to-protect-seniors-and-staff-in-long-term-care-homes-during-covid-19-ou.html>
- Ontario. (2020bw, May 29). *Ontario Opens Up COVID-19 Testing Across the Province*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-opens-up-covid-19-testing-across-the-province.html>
- Ontario. (2020bx, May 30). *Backcountry Camping available at Ontario Parks and on Crown Lands Starting June 1*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2020/05/backcountry-camping-available-at-ontario-parks-and-on-crown-lands-starting-june-1.html>
- Ontario. (2020by, May 30). *How Ontario is responding to COVID-19 | Ontario.ca*. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-ontario-is-responding-covid-19#section-0>
- Ontario. (2020bz, May 30). *Ontario Provides Consumers with Greater Stability and Predictability with Their Electricity Bills | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/57061/ontario-provides-consumers-with-greater-stability-and-predictability-with-their-electricity-bills>
- Ontario. (2020ca, May 30). *Ontario Takes Additional Steps to Protect Seniors in Retirement Homes during COVID-19*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/ontario-takes-additional-steps-to-protect-seniors-in-retirement-homes-during-covid-19.html>
- Ontario. (2020cb, June 1). *Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health to Hold Bi-Weekly Media Briefings*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/advisory/57067/chief-medical-officer-of-health-and-associate-chief-medical-officer-of-health-to-hold-bi-weekly-medi>
- Ontario. (2020cc, June 1). *Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health to Hold Bi-Weekly Media Briefings*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/06/chief-medical-officer-of-health-and-associate-chief-medical-officer-of-health-to-hold-bi-weekly-medi.html>
- Ontario. (2020cd, June 2). *New Management Appointed at Kitchener Long-Term Care Home*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/06/new-management-appointed-at-kitchener-long-term-care-home.html>
- Ontario. (2020ce, June 2). *Ontario Helps Manufacturers Ramp Up Production of Personal Protective Equipment*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-helps-manufacturers-ramp-up-production-of-personal-protective-equipment.html>
- Ontario. (2020cf, June 4). *Hospital Assumes Management of Woodbridge Vista Care Community in Vaughan*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/06/hospital-assumes-management-of-woodbridge-vista-care-community-in-vaughan.html>
- Ontario. (2020cg, June 4). *Ontario Appoints Special Advisor to Develop Health Data Platform*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57110/ontario-appoints-special-advisor-to-develop-health-data-platform>

- Ontario. (2020ch, June 4). *Ontario Creates Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-creates-premiers-council-on-equality-of-opportunity.html>
- Ontario. (2020ci, June 8). *Ontario Permits More Businesses and Services to Reopen in the Coming Days*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-permits-more-businesses-and-services-to-reopen-in-the-coming-days.html>
- Ontario. (2020cj, June 9). *Ontario Helping Parents Return to Work*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-helping-parents-return-to-work.html>
- Ontario. (2020ck, June 10). *Beaches and Campsites to Open at Ontario Parks*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2020/06/beaches-and-campsites-to-open-at-ontario-parks.html>
- Ontario. (2020cl, June 10). *Ontario Unveils a Plan to Reopen Postsecondary Education*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-unveils-a-plan-to-reopen-postsecondary-education.html>
- Ontario. (2020cm, June 11). *Ontario Lifting 30-Day Supply Limit on Prescriptions*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohlrc/en/2020/06/ontario-lifting-30-day-supply-limit-on-prescriptions.html>
- Ontario. (2020cn, June 11). *Ontario to Resume Family Visits in Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Residential Care Settings*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-to-resume-family-visits-in-long-term-care-homes-retirement-homes-and-other-residential-care.html>
- Ontario. (2020co, June 12). *Ontarians Encouraged to Establish Social Circles*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57194/ontarians-encouraged-to-establish-social-circles>
- Ontario. (2020cp, June 13). *Ontario Eases Restrictions on Wedding and Funeral Ceremonies*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohlrc/en/2020/06/ontario-eases-restrictions-on-wedding-and-funeral-ceremonies.html>
- Ontario. (2020cq, June 15). *More People Can Get Back to Work as Additional Businesses and Services to Reopen This Week*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/more-people-can-get-back-to-work-as-additional-businesses-and-services-to-reopen-this-week.html>
- Ontario. (2020cr, June 15). *Ontario Helps Local Business Test and Certify Medical-Grade PPE*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2020/06/ontario-helps-local-business-test-and-certify-medical-grade-ppe.html>
- Ontario. (2020cs, June 16). *Ontario Releases Guide on How to Develop a Workplace Safety Plan*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-releases-guide-on-how-to-develop-a-workplace-safety-plan.html>
- Ontario. (2020ct, June 18). *Ontario Makes Major Investment in Mental Health and Technology to Support Students*. News.Ontario.Ca. <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/06/ontario-makes-major-investment-in-mental-health-and-technology-to-support-students.html>
- Ontario. (2020cu, June 19). *Canada and Ontario invest in roads and bridges to support rural communities in Central and Eastern Ontario | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57304/canada-and-ontario-invest-in-roads-and-bridges-to-support-rural-communities-in-central-and-eastern-o-1>

- Ontario. (2020cv, June 19). *Minister MacLeod Joins Niagara Region for its Official Reopening*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57300/minister-macleod-joins-niagara-region-for-its-official-reopening>
- Ontario. (2020cw, June 19). *Ontario Makes Historic Investment in Public Education*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57298/ontario-makes-historic-investment-in-public-education>
- Ontario. (2020cx, June 19). *Ontario Prepares for the Safe Reopening of Schools*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57309/ontario-prepares-for-the-safe-reopening-of-schools>
- Ontario. (2020cy, June 24). *Ontario Takes Immediate Action to Stop COVID-19 Outbreaks in Windsor-Essex*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57366/ontario-takes-immediate-action-to-stop-covid-19-outbreaks-in-windsor-essex>
- Ontario. (2020cz, June 25). *Canada and Ontario invest in roads and bridges for rural communities in Northern Ontario*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57371/canada-and-ontario-invest-in-roads-and-bridges-for-rural-communities-in-northern-ontario>
- Ontario. (2020da, June 25). *Ontario Helping Youth Pursue New Opportunities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57389/ontario-helping-youth-pursue-new-opportunities>
- Ontario. (2020db, June 26). *Ontario Providing Additional Support for Seniors*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57413/ontario-providing-additional-support-for-seniors>
- Ontario. (2020dc, June 30). *Ontario Building a Safer, More Reliable Transportation System*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57437/ontario-building-a-safer-more-reliable-transportation-system#contacts>
- Ontario. (2020dd, June 30). *Ontario Courts Gradually Resuming In-Person Proceedings*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57443/ontario-courts-gradually-resuming-in-person-proceedings>
- Ontario. (2020de, June 30). *Ontario Encourages Support of Local Small Businesses*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57370/ontario-encourages-support-of-local-small-businesses>
- Ontario. (2020df, July 2). *Ontario Provides Additional Funding to Support Municipalities and Urban Indigenous Community Partners*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57460/ontario-provides-additional-funding-to-support-municipalities-and-urban-indigenous-community-partner>
- Ontario. (2020dg, July 3). *Canadian Armed Forces Depart Ontario Long-Term Care Homes*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57468/canadian-armed-forces-depart-ontario-long-term-care-homes>
- Ontario. (2020dh, July 3). *Ontario Helps Natural Products Manufacturer Expand Operations in Sault Ste. Marie*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57471/ontario-helps-natural-products-manufacturer-expand-operations-in-sault-ste-marie>
- Ontario. (2020di, July 3). *Ontario Launches Online Training to Promote Safe Workplaces*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57484/ontario-launches-online-training-to-promote-safe-workplaces>
- Ontario. (2020dj, July 3). *Ontario Supporting Jobs and Affordable Housing in Georgina*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57469/ontario-supporting-jobs-and-affordable-housing-in-georgina>

- Ontario. (2020dk, July 3). *Ontario Supporting Restaurants as Province Safely Reopens*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57466/ontario-supporting-restaurants-as-province-safely-reopens>
- Ontario. (2020dl, July 6). *Government Proposes Made-in-Ontario Plan for Growth, Renewal and Economic Recovery*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57494/new-legislation-first-step-in-a-made-in-ontario-plan-for-growth-renewal-and-economic-recovery>
- Ontario. (2020dm, July 7). *Ontario Introduces Legislation to Protect Public Health as Economy Reopens | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57509/ontario-introduces-legislation-to-protect-public-health-as-economy-reopens>
- Ontario. (2020dn, July 8). *Ontario Makes it Easier for Truck Drivers to get Tested for COVID-19 | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57516/ontario-makes-it-easier-for-truck-drivers-to-get-tested-for-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020do, July 9). *Canada and Ontario Supporting Farmers through Enhanced Insurance Protection*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57547/canada-and-ontario-supporting-farmers-through-enhanced-insurance-protection>
- Ontario. (2020dp, July 9). *Ontario Expanding Access to the Modern Digital Economy*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57537/ontario-expanding-access-to-the-modern-digital-economy>
- Ontario. (2020dq, July 10). *Proudly Supporting Ontario's Manufacturing Sector*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57553/proudly-supporting-ontarios-manufacturing-sector>
- Ontario. (2020dr, July 14). *Province Supports Development of Made-in-Ontario N95 Respirators*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57587/province-supports-development-of-made-in-ontario-n95-respirators>
- Ontario. (2020ds, July 15). *Ontario Supporting Businesses in Almaguin Highlands Region*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57601/ontario-supporting-businesses-in-almaguin-highlands-region>
- Ontario. (2020dt, July 16). *Farmers Support Expanded Risk Management Program | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57628/farmers-support-expanded-risk-management-program>
- Ontario. (2020du, July 16). *Ontario Extends Expiry Period of Marriage Licences*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57633/ontario-extends-expiry-period-of-marriage-licences>
- Ontario. (2020dv, July 17). *Province Takes Steps to Ensure All Ontarians Benefit from Local Research and Innovation*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57653/province-takes-steps-to-ensure-all-ontarians-benefit-from-local-research-and-innovation>
- Ontario. (2020dw, July 20). *Province Invites Ontarians to Safely Enjoy Summer at Ontario Place*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57678/province-invites-ontarians-to-safely-enjoy-summer-at-ontario-place>
- Ontario. (2020dx, July 21). *Ontario Unveils New Innovative Approach to Building Long-Term Care Homes Faster*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57690/ontario-unveils-new-innovative-approach-to-building-long-term-care-homes-faster>

- Ontario. (2020dy, July 22). *Ontario Legislature Adjourns after Significant Sitting in Response to COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57711/ontario-legislature-adjourns-after-significant-sitting-in-response-to-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020dz, July 22). *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57702/protecting-tenants-and-strengthening-community-housing-act-2020-1>
- Ontario. (2020ea, July 23). *Ontario Announces Five New Ontario Health Teams*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57724/ontario-announces-five-new-ontario-health-teams>
- Ontario. (2020eb, July 23). *Ontario Investing in Rural Economic Growth and Job Creation*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57729/ontario-investing-in-rural-economic-growth-and-job-creation>
- Ontario. (2020ec, July 23). *Ontario Supports Indigenous Businesses During COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57721/ontario-supports-indigenous-businesses-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020ed, July 27). *Historic Agreement Delivers up to \$4 Billion to Support Municipalities and Transit*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57758/historic-agreement-delivers-up-to-4-billion-to-support-municipalities-and-transit>
- Ontario. (2020ee, July 28). *Canada and Ontario Invest in Affordable Housing for Seniors in York Region*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57786/canada-and-ontario-invest-in-affordable-housing-for-seniors-in-york-region>
- Ontario. (2020ef, July 28). *Ontario Fast-Tracks Long-Term Care Home for Ajax*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57780/ontario-fast-tracks-long-term-care-home-for-ajax>
- Ontario. (2020eg, July 28). *Province Announces Ontario Health Team in Eastern Ottawa*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57775/province-announces-ontario-health-team-in-eastern-ottawa>
- Ontario. (2020eh, July 29). *Ontario Invests in Supportive Housing for Niagara Region's Most Vulnerable*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57807/ontario-invests-in-supportive-housing-for-niagara-regions-most-vulnerable>
- Ontario. (2020ei, July 30). *Ontario Continues to Gradually and Safely Reopen Child Care for Working Parents*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57835/ontario-continues-to-gradually-and-safely-reopen-child-care-for-working-parents>
- Ontario. (2020ej, July 30). *Ontario Releases Plan for Safe Reopening of Schools in September*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57838/ontario-releases-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools-in-september>
- Ontario. (2020ek, July 31). *COVID Alert Available for Download Beginning Today*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57862/covid-alert-available-for-download-beginning-today>
- Ontario. (2020el, July 31). *Ontario Expands Services at All DriveTest Centres*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57857/ontario-expands-services-at-all-drivetest-centres>
- Ontario. (2020em, July 31). *Ontario Implementing Additional Measures at Bars and Restaurants to Help Limit the Spread of COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57850/ontario-implementing-additional-measures-at-bars-and-restaurants-to-help-limit-the-spread-of-covid-1>

- Ontario. (2020en, July 31). *Support for Small Business Tenants and Landlords Extended*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/57868/support-for-small-business-tenants-and-landlords-extended>
- Ontario. (2020eo, August 4). *Ontario Provides More Supports for Families of Children on the Autism Spectrum*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57882/ontario-provides-more-supports-for-families-of-children-on-the-autism-spectrum>
- Ontario. (2020ep, August 4). *Province Supporting Innovative Made-in-Ontario Technology to Sanitize PPE*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57880/province-supporting-innovative-made-in-ontario-technology-to-sanitize-ppe>
- Ontario. (2020eq, August 5). *Ontario Supporting Non-Profits as Province Recovers from COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57896/ontario-supporting-non-profits-as-province-recovers-from-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020er, August 6). *Canada and Ontario invest in roads and bridges, connecting rural communities | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57901/canada-and-ontario-invest-in-roads-and-bridges-connecting-rural-communities>
- Ontario. (2020es, August 6). *Investing in the Future of Ontario's Tourism Industry*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57914/investing-in-the-future-of-ontarios-tourism-industry>
- Ontario. (2020et, August 6). *Ontario Supports Health Sciences Sector in the North*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57918/ontario-supports-health-sciences-sector-in-the-north>
- Ontario. (2020eu, August 11). *Ontario Building Health and Safety in Indigenous Workplaces and Communities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57960/ontario-building-health-and-safety-in-indigenous-workplaces-and-communities>
- Ontario. (2020ev, August 11). *Ontario Fast-Tracks Long-Term Care Home in Toronto*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57958/ontario-fast-tracks-long-term-care-home-in-toronto>
- Ontario. (2020ew, August 12). *Ontario Provides Update to Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57967/ontario-provides-update-to-ontarios-action-plan-responding-to-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020ex, August 12). *Ontario Providing Municipalities with up to \$1.6 Billion in First Round of Emergency Funding*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57970/ontario-providing-municipalities-with-up-to-16-billion-in-first-round-of-emergency-funding>
- Ontario. (2020ey, August 14). *Canadian Armed Forces Share Promising Exit Report on Long-Term Care Mission*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58014/canadian-armed-forces-share-promising-exit-report-on-long-term-care-mission>
- Ontario. (2020ez, August 14). *Ontario Supporting the Safe Reopening of More Spaces at Gyms and Recreation Centres*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58002/ontario-supporting-the-safe-reopening-of-more-spaces-at-gyms-and-recreation-centres>
- Ontario. (2020fa, August 18). *Ontario Resumes Infant Hearing Checks*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58036/ontario-resumes-infant-hearing-checks>
- Ontario. (2020fb, August 19). *Ontario and Municipalities Work Towards a Strong Economic Recovery*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58064/ontario-and-municipalities-work-towards-a-strong-economic-recovery>

- Ontario. (2020fc, August 19). *Ontario Invests in Made-in-Ontario Physician Scheduling Technology in the Fight Against COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58052/ontario-invests-in-made-in-ontario-physician-scheduling-technology-in-the-fight-against-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020fd, August 20). *Investing in Northern Ontario's Tourism Industry*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58086/investing-in-northern-ontarios-tourism-industry>
- Ontario. (2020fe, August 20). *Ontario Extends Orders Under the Reopening Ontario Act, 2020*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58072/ontario-extends-orders-under-the-reopening-ontario-act-2020>
- Ontario. (2020ff, August 21). *Ontario Expands Indoor Capacity for Meeting and Event Facilities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58108/ontario-expands-indoor-capacity-for-meeting-and-event-facilities>
- Ontario. (2020fg, August 21). *Ontario Partners with Federal Government and 3M Canada on New N95 Respirator Manufacturing Facility*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58102/ontario-partners-with-federal-government-and-3m-canada-on-new-n95-respirator-manufacturing-facility>
- Ontario. (2020fh, August 24). *Ontario Supports Retooling of Local Brewery to Help Combat Covid-19 Outbreak*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58112/ontario-supports-retooling-of-local-brewery-to-help-combat-covid-19-outbreak>
- Ontario. (2020fi, August 25). *Ontario Supports Local Distillery in the Fight Against COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58118/ontario-supports-local-distillery-in-the-fight-against-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020fj, August 26). *Additional Funds Enhance Ontario's Robust Back-to-School Plan*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58135/additional-funds-enhance-ontarios-robust-back-to-school-plan>
- Ontario. (2020fk, August 26). *Ontario Names Dr. Dirk Huyer as Coordinator of the Provincial Outbreak Response*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/background/58137/ontario-names-dr-dirk-huyer-as-coordinator-of-the-provincial-outbreak-response>
- Ontario. (2020fl, August 26). *Ontario Releases COVID-19 Management Plan for Schools*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58136/ontario-releases-covid-19-management-plan-for-schools>
- Ontario. (2020fm, August 28). *Safe Outings Now Possible for Long-Term Care Home Residents*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58181/safe-outings-now-possible-for-long-term-care-home-residents>
- Ontario. (2020fn, September 2). *Ontario Protecting Transit Riders and Workers as Province Reopens*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58213/ontario-protecting-transit-riders-and-workers-as-province-reopens>
- Ontario. (2020fo, September 3). *Governments Extend Child Care Funding to Support Working Parents*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58238/governments-extend-child-care-funding-to-support-working-parents>
- Ontario. (2020fp, September 3). *Ontario Extends Support for Employers and Employees Impacted by COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58240/ontario-extends-support-for-employers-and-employees-impacted-by-covid-19>

- Ontario. (2020fq, September 4). *Province Supports Ontario-Made Face Masks in the Fight Against COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58262/province-supports-ontario-made-face-masks-in-the-fight-against-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020fr, September 8). *Ontario Reopens Apprenticeship and Trade-Related Exam Centres*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58305/ontario-reopens-apprenticeship-and-trade-related-exam-centres>
- Ontario. (2020fs, September 9). *Ontario Expanding Hospital in Moosonee*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58306/ontario-expanding-hospital-in-moosonee>
- Ontario. (2020ft, September 9). *Ontario-Québec Summit Strengthens Ties between the Two Provinces*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58314/ontario-quebec-summit-strengthens-ties-between-the-two-provinces>
- Ontario. (2020fu, September 10). *New Research Projects Aim to Improve Ontario's Response to COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/background/58332/new-research-projects-aim-to-improve-ontarios-response-to-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020fv, September 10). *Ontario Expanding Innovative Mental Health and Addictions Services*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58333/ontario-expanding-innovative-mental-health-and-addictions>
- Ontario. (2020fw, September 11). *New Gold Mine Will Support Economic Recovery in Northern Ontario*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58358/new-gold-mine-will-support-economic-recovery-in-northern-ontario>
- Ontario. (2020fx, September 11). *Ontario Launches COVID-19 School and Licensed Child Care-specific Web Page*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/58350/ontario-launches-covid-19-school-and-licensed-child-care-specific-web-page>
- Ontario. (2020fy, September 11). *Ontario Supports Film and Television Industry in the North*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58354/ontario-supports-film-and-television-industry-in-the-north>
- Ontario. (2020fz, September 14). *Ontario Investing in Hospital Upgrades and Repairs*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58366/ontario-investing-in-hospital-upgrades-and-repairs>
- Ontario. (2020ga, September 15). *Province Ramps Up Production of Ontario-Made Ventilators*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58380/province-ramps-up-production-of-ontario-made-ventilators>
- Ontario. (2020gb, September 16). *Ontario Launches New COVID-19 Screening Tool to Help Protect Students and Staff*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58385/ontario-launches-new-covid-19-screening-tool-to-help-protect-students-and-staff>
- Ontario. (2020gc, September 17). *2021 Canada Summer Games in Niagara Region Postponed*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/58392/2021-canada-summer-games-in-niagara-region-postponed>
- Ontario. (2020gd, September 17). *Ontario Introduces Legislation to Freeze Residential Rent in 2021*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58396/ontario-introduces-legislation-to-freeze-residential-rent-in-2021>

- Ontario. (2020ge, September 18). *Ontario Supports Telephone-Based Social and Educational Programs for Seniors*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58416/ontario-supports-telephone-based-social-and-educational-programs-for-seniors>
- Ontario. (2020gf, September 19). *Ontario Limits the Size of Unmonitored and Private Social Gatherings across Entire Province | Ontario Newsroom*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58449/ontario-limits-the-size-of-unmonitored-and-private-social-gatherings-across-entire-province>
- Ontario. (2020gg, September 21). *Ontario Presses Ottawa to Increase Share of Health Funding*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58457/ontario-presses-ottawa-to-increase-share-of-health-funding>
- Ontario. (2020gh, September 22). *Ontario Set to Launch Largest Flu Immunization Campaign in Province's History*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58474/ontario-set-to-launch-largest-flu-immunization-campaign-in-provinces-history>
- Ontario. (2020gi, September 23). *Ontario Set to Employ the Largest Number of Labour Inspectors in Provincial History*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58482/ontario-set-to-employ-the-largest-number-of-labour-inspectors-in-provincial-history>
- Ontario. (2020gj, September 24). *Ontario Extends Critical Delivery Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58510/ontario-extends-critical-delivery-program-for-seniors-and-people-with-disabilities>
- Ontario. (2020gk, September 24). *Ontario Investing More Than \$1 Billion to Expand COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58515/ontario-investing-more-than-1-billion-to-expand-covid-19-testing-and-contact-tracing>
- Ontario. (2020gl, September 24). *Ontario Updates COVID-19 Testing Guidelines*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/58507/ontario-updates-covid-19-testing-guidelines>
- Ontario. (2020gm, September 25). *New Public Health Measures Implemented Provincewide to Keep Ontarians Safe*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58548/new-public-health-measures-implemented-provincewide-to-keep-ontarians-safe>
- Ontario. (2020gn, September 25). *Ontario Investing \$741 Million to Reduce Surgeries Backlog and Expand Access to Care*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58557/ontario-investing-741-million-to-reduce-surgeries-backlog-and-expand-access-to-care>
- Ontario. (2020go, September 25). *The Ottawa Hospital Enters Into Management Agreements With Extendicare West End Villa and Extendicare Laurier Manor*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58521/the-ottawa-hospital-enters-into-management-agreements-with-extendicare-west-end-villa-and-extendicar>
- Ontario. (2020gp, September 28). *Ontario Launches Recovery Program for Northern Businesses Impacted by COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58577/ontario-launches-recovery-program-for-northern-businesses-impacted-by-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020gq, September 28). *Ontario Supporting the Province's Vibrant Film and TV Sector*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58570/ontario-supporting-the-provinces-vibrant-film-and-tv-sector>
- Ontario. (2020gr, September 30). *Ontario Delivers \$2.8 Billion COVID-19 Fall Preparedness Plan*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58610/ontario-delivers-28-billion-covid-19-fall-preparedness-plan>

- Ontario. (2020gs, September 30). *Ontario Modernizes Social Assistance to Help More People Re-enter the Workforce*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58607/ontario-modernizes-social-assistance-to-help-more-people-re-enter-the-workforce>
- Ontario. (2020gt, October 1). *Ontario Provides \$461 Million to Temporarily Enhance Wages For Personal Support Workers*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58627/ontario-provides-461-million-to-temporarily-enhance-wages-for-personal-support-workers>
- Ontario. (2020gu, October 1). *Ontario Revises COVID-19 Screening Guidance for Schools and Child Care*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58629/ontario-revises-covid-19-screening-guidance-for-schools-and-child-care>
- Ontario. (2020gv, October 2). *Ontario Implementing Additional Public Health and Testing Measures to Keep People Safe*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58645/ontario-implementing-additional-public-health-and-testing-measures-to-keep-people-safe>
- Ontario. (2020gw, October 5). *COVID-19: Long-term care homes in areas with visitor restrictions*. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-long-term-care-homes-in-areas-visitor-restrictions>
- Ontario. (2020gx, October 5). *Ontario Releases \$35 Million for Schools in Priority Communities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/58668/ontario-releases-35-million-for-schools-in-priority-communities>
- Ontario. (2020gy, October 5). *Ontario Supports Training for Personal Support Workers in Niagara*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58657/ontario-supports-training-for-personal-support-workers-in-niagara>
- Ontario. (2020gz, October 6). *Ontario Increases Mental Health Funding for Postsecondary Students*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58688/ontario-increases-mental-health-funding-for-postsecondary-students>
- Ontario. (2020ha, October 7). *Ontario Building a Modern, Connected and Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions System*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58717/ontario-building-a-modern-connected-and-comprehensive-mental-health-and-addictions-system>
- Ontario. (2020hb, October 7). *Ontario Supports Small Main Street Businesses with \$60 Million in Funding through PPE Grant*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58708/ontario-supports-small-main-street-businesses-with-60-million-in-funding-through-ppe-grant>
- Ontario. (2020hc, October 7). *Unity Health Toronto and Norwood Nursing Home enter into Management Agreement*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58724/unity-health-toronto-hospital-and-norwood-nursing-home-enter-into-management-agreement>
- Ontario. (2020hd, October 8). *Ontario Hires Health System Leader as Education Health Advisor*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/58741/ontario-hires-health-system-leader-as-education-health-advisor>
- Ontario. (2020he, October 8). *Ontario Supporting Local Festivals and Events*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58734/ontario-supporting-local-festivals-and-events>
- Ontario. (2020hf, October 9). *Ontario Taking Immediate Action to Reduce Rates of Transmission in Toronto, Ottawa and Peel Region*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/58762/ontario-taking-immediate-action-to-reduce-rates-of-transmission-in-toronto-ottawa-and-peel-region>

- Ontario. (2020hg, October 10). *Premier Ford Urges All Ontarians to Celebrate Thanksgiving with Immediate Household*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/58750/premier-ford-urges-all-ontarians-to-celebrate-thanksgiving-with-immediate-household>
- Ontario. (2020hh, October 13). *Governments Investing \$26.6 Million to Further Protect Ontario Agri-Food Workers During COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58785/governments-investing-266-million-to-further-protect-ontario-agri-food-workers-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020hi, October 13). *New Management Ordered at Beeton, Ontario, Long-Term Care Home*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58783/new-management-ordered-at-beeton-ontario-long-term-care-home>
- Ontario. (2020hj, October 13). *Ontario Increases Production of COVID-19 Testing Supplies*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58795/ontario-increases-production-of-covid-19-testing-supplies>
- Ontario. (2020hk, October 14). *Ontario Hiring Hundreds More Contact Tracers and Case Managers*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58807/ontario-hiring-hundreds-more-contact-tracers-and-case-managers>
- Ontario. (2020hl, October 14). *Outings on Hold for Long-Term Care Homes in Areas of Higher Community Spread*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58803/outings-on-hold-for-long-term-care-homes-in-areas-of-higher-community-spread>
- Ontario. (2020hm, October 15). *Millions Across Canada Now Using Made-in-Ontario COVID Alert App*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58831/millions-across-canada-now-using-made-in-ontario-covid-alert-app>
- Ontario. (2020hn, October 15). *Ontario Adding Over 200 More Transitional Care Beds Across the Province*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58823/ontario-adding-over-200-more-transitional-care-beds-across-the-province>
- Ontario. (2020ho, October 16). *Ontario Moving Additional Region to Modified Stage 2*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58842/ontario-moving-additional-region-to-modified-stage-2>
- Ontario. (2020hp, October 16). *Ontario Supports the Production of Critical Supplies to Fight the Spread of COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58838/ontario-supports-the-production-of-critical-supplies-to-fight-the-spread-of-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020hq, October 17). *York Region Added to List of Areas of Higher Community Spread*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58858/york-region-added-to-list-of-areas-of-higher-community-spread>
- Ontario. (2020hr, October 19). *Ontario Making Government Services More Convenient, Reliable, and Accessible*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58872/ontario-making-government-services-more-convenient-reliable-and-accessible>
- Ontario. (2020hs, October 19). *Stay Safe and Follow Public Health Advice This Halloween*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/58867/stay-safe-and-follow-public-health-advice-this-halloween>
- Ontario. (2020ht, October 20). *Ontario Extends COVID-19 Orders to Protect the Public*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58882/ontario-extends-covid-19-orders-to-protect-the-public>

- Ontario. (2020hu, October 20). *Ontario Protects Workers, Volunteers and Organizations Who Make Honest Efforts to Follow COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines and Laws.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58886/ontario-protects-workers-volunteers-and-organizations-who-make-honest-efforts-to-follow-covid-19-pub>
- Ontario. (2020hv, October 21). *Ontario Expanding Mental Health Services for Children and Youth.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58894/ontario-expanding-mental-health-services-for-children-and-youth>
- Ontario. (2020hw, October 23). *Canadian Red Cross Supporting Long-Term Care Home in Hawkesbury.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58920/canadian-red-cross-supporting-long-term-care-home-in-hawkesbury>
- Ontario. (2020hx, October 23). *Ontario Investing \$8.7 Million to Expand Quinte Health Care Network.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58932/ontario-investing-87-million-to-expand-quinte-health-care-network>
- Ontario. (2020hy, October 23). *Ontario Takes Steps to Ensure Surplus Food Does Not Go to Waste.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58930/ontario-takes-steps-to-ensure-surplus-food-does-not-go-to-waste>
- Ontario. (2020hz, October 27). *Ontario Adding Over 760 Hospital Beds Across the Province.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58955/ontario-adding-over-760-hospital-beds-across-the-province>
- Ontario. (2020ia, October 28). *New Management Ordered at Niagara Falls, Ontario Long-Term Care Home.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58963/new-management-ordered-at-niagara-falls-ontario-long-term-care-home>
- Ontario. (2020ib, October 28). *Ontario Helps Protect Most Vulnerable People Across the Province.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58974/ontario-helps-protect-most-vulnerable-people-across-the-province>
- Ontario. (2020ic). *Ontario Launching COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58972/ontario-launching-covid-19-resilience-infrastructure-stream>
- Ontario. (2020id, October 29). *UPDATED: Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health to Hold Bi-Weekly Media Briefings.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/advisory/58976/updated-chief-medical-officer-of-health-and-associate-chief-medical-officer-of-health-to-hold-bi-wee>
- Ontario. (2020ie, October 30). *Celebrate Halloween Safely This Year.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/59021/celebrate-halloween-safely-this-year>
- Ontario. (2020if, October 30). *Ontario Launches Innovative Solution to Improve Long-Term Care.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59012/ontario-launches-innovative-solution-to-improve-long-term-care>
- Ontario. (2020ig, October 30). *The Ottawa Hospital and Extendicare (Canada) Inc. Enter into Management Agreement.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58989/the-ottawa-hospital-and-extendicare-starwood-enter-into-management-agreement>
- Ontario. (2020ih, November 3). *Ontario Releases COVID-19 Response Framework to Help Keep the Province Safe and Open.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59051/ontario-releases-covid-19-response-framework-to-help-keep-the-province-safe-and-open>

- Ontario. (2020ii, November 3). *Ontario Selling Surplus Properties to Build Three New Long-Term Care Homes*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59047/ontario-selling-surplus-properties-to-build-three-new-long-term-care-homes>
- Ontario. (2020ij, November 5). *Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59065/ontarios-action-plan-protect-support-recover>
- Ontario. (2020ik, November 6). *Ontario Increasing Services to Workers and Small Businesses*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59085/ontario-increasing-services-to-workers-and-small-businesses>
- Ontario. (2020il, November 6). *Ontario Investing \$15.2 Billion to Protect People and Support Health Care During COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59083/ontario-investing-152-billion-to-protect-people-and-support-health-care-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020im, November 6). *Ontario Moves Public Health Unit Regions into COVID-19 Response Framework to Keep Ontario Safe and Open*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59081/ontario-moves-public-health-unit-regions-into-covid-19-response-framework-to-keep-ontario-safe-and-o>
- Ontario. (2020in, November 9). *Ontario Providing Additional Public Health Support for Peel Region*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59104/ontario-providing-additional-public-health-support-for-peel-region>
- Ontario. (2020io, November 9). *Ontario Supporting Agricultural and Horticultural Societies During COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59116/ontario-supporting-agricultural-and-horticultural-societies-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020ip, November 9). *Ontario Supporting Inclusive Communities for All Ages and Abilities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59119/ontario-supporting-inclusive-communities-for-all-ages-and-abilities>
- Ontario. (2020iq, November 9). *Province Launching Recruitment Program to Support Long-Term Care Sector*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59108/province-launching-recruitment-program-to-support-long-term-care-sector>
- Ontario. (2020ir, November 12). *Ontario Investing Additional \$761 million to Build and Renovate More Long-Term Care Homes*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59173/ontario-investing-additional-761-million-to-build-and-renovate-more-long-term-care-homes>
- Ontario. (2020is, November 13). *Ontario Provides Additional Support to Help Indigenous Students Succeed*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59193/ontario-provides-additional-support-to-help-indigenous-students-succeed>
- Ontario. (2020it, November 13). *Ontario Supports Production of Face Shields in the Fight Against COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59196/ontario-supports-production-of-face-shields-in-the-fight-against-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020iu, November 13). *Ontario Updating COVID-19 Response Framework to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59205/ontario-updating-covid-19-response-framework-to-help-stop-the-spread-of-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020iv, November 16). *Ontario Protecting Agri-Food Workers and Food Supply Chain*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59219/ontario-protecting-agri-food-workers-and-food-supply-chain>

- Ontario. (2020iw, November 17). *Ontario Expanding Mobile Crisis Services to Respond to Mental Health Emergencies*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59241/ontario-expanding-mobile-crisis-services-to-respond-to-mental-health-emergencies>
- Ontario. (2020ix, November 17). *Ontario Opens COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream for Municipalities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59239/ontario-opens-covid-19-resilience-infrastructure-stream-for-municipalities>
- Ontario. (2020iy, November 18). *Province Approves 13 New Ontario Health Teams*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59250/province-approves-13-new-ontario-health-teams>
- Ontario. (2020iz, November 19). *Ontario Launches Workplace Education and Enforcement Campaigns*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59276/ontario-launches-workplace-education-and-enforcement-campaigns>
- Ontario. (2020ja, November 19). *Ontario Supporting Small Businesses with Financial Advice and Training*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59271/ontario-supporting-small-businesses-with-financial-advice-and-training>
- Ontario. (2020jb, November 20). *Ontario Providing New and Upgraded Long-Term Care Spaces*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59290/ontario-providing-new-and-upgraded-long-term-care-spaces>
- Ontario. (2020jc, November 20). *Ontario Taking Further Action to Stop the Spread of COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59305/ontario-taking-further-action-to-stop-the-spread-of-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020jd). *COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open—Lockdown Measures*. <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open-en-2020-11-24.pdf>
- Ontario. (2020je, November 23). *Motion Tabled to Reappoint Chief Medical Officer of Health*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/59315/motion-tabled-to-reappoint-chief-medical-officer-of-health>
- Ontario. (2020jf, November 23). *Ontario Appoints New Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59318/ontario-appoints-new-ministers-covid-19-vaccine-distribution-task-force>
- Ontario. (2020jg, November 24). *Ontario Deploys Rapid Testing to Support COVID-19 Response*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59330/ontario-deploys-rapid-testing-to-support-covid-19-response>
- Ontario. (2020jh, November 25). *Celebrate the Holiday Season Safely*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59338/celebrate-the-holiday-season-safely>
- Ontario. (2020ji, November 25). *Ontario Orders New Management at Mississauga Long-Term Care Home*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59340/ontario-orders-new-management-at-mississauga-long-term-care-home>
- Ontario. (2020jj, November 26). *Ontario Cancelling Road Tests for Regions in Grey (Lockdown) Level*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59362/ontario-cancelling-road-tests-for-regions-in-grey-lockdown-level>

- Ontario. (2020jk, November 26). *Ontario Modernizing Application Process for Social Assistance*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59358/ontario-modernizing-application-process-for-social-assistance>
- Ontario. (2020jl, November 26). *Ontario Providing Additional Funding to Enhance Safety and Protection in Schools*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59365/ontario-providing-additional-funding-to-enhance-safety-and-protection-in-schools>
- Ontario. (2020jm, November 26). *Province Proposes Cap on Delivery Fees to Support Local Restaurants*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59356/province-proposes-cap-on-delivery-fees-to-support-local-restaurants>
- Ontario. (2020jn, November 26). *Targeted Testing for School Communities*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59361/targeted-testing-for-school-communities>
- Ontario. (2020jo, November 27). *Governments Taking Action to Meet Demands of Ontario's Meat Sector and Support Farmers*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59382/governments-taking-action-to-meet-demands-of-ontarios-meat-sector-and-support-farmers>
- Ontario. (2020jp, November 27). *Ontario Calls on Ottawa for Certainty as COVID-19 Vaccine Preparation Continues*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59401/ontario-calls-on-ottawa-for-certainty-as-covid-19-vaccine-preparation-continues>
- Ontario. (2020jq, November 27). *Ontario Expanding Existing Community Paramedicine Programs to Long-Term Care*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59381/ontario-expanding-existing-community-paramedicine-programs-to-long-term-care>
- Ontario. (2020jr, November 27). *ServiceOntario Offering Appointment Booking to Help Alleviate Wait Times*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59396/serviceontario-offering-appointment-booking-to-help-alleviate-wait-times>
- Ontario. (2020js, November 28). *Ontario Supports Management Agreements at Two Long-Term Care Homes*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59409/ontario-supports-management-agreements-at-two-long-term-care-homes>
- Ontario. (2020jt, November 30). *Ontario Providing Additional Financial Support for Young Learners*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59415/ontario-providing-additional-financial-support-for-young-learners>
- Ontario. (2020ju, December 1). *Ontario Collaborates with Industry Experts to Plan the COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59425/ontario-collaborates-with-industry-experts-to-plan-the-covid-19-vaccine-rollout>
- Ontario. (2020jv, December 1). *Ontario Supports Local Manufacturers Producing Masks for Adults and Children*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59422/ontario-supports-local-manufacturers-producing-masks-for-adults-and-children>
- Ontario. (2020jw, December 2). *Ontario Expanding Innovative Home and Community Care Services*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59437/ontario-expanding-innovative-home-and-community-care-services>
- Ontario. (2020jx, December 3). *Ontario Supports Management Agreement Between Lakeridge Health and Sunnycrest Nursing Home*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59466/ontario-supports-management-agreement-between-lakeridge-health-and-sunnycrest-nursing-home>

- Ontario. (2020jy, December 4). *Ontario Appoints Members of the Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59475/ontario-appoints-members-of-the-ministers-covid-19-vaccine-distribution-task-force>
- Ontario. (2020jz, December 4). *Ontario Helping Employers Train and Hire More Apprentices*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59494/ontario-helping-employers-train-and-hire-more-apprentices>
- Ontario. (2020ka, December 4). *Ontario Supporting the Niagara Parks Commission During COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59477/ontario-supporting-the-niagara-parks-commission-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020kb, December 7). *Ontario Identifies Key Groups for Distribution of Initial COVID-19 Vaccines*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59508/ontario-identifies-key-groups-for-distribution-of-initial-covid-19-vaccines>
- Ontario. (2020kc, December 8). *Ontario Legislature Adjourns for 2020 after Successful Fall Session*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59528/ontario-legislature-adjourns-for-2020-after-successful-fall-session>
- Ontario. (2020kd, December 8). *Ontario Protecting Workers and Employers during COVID-19*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59525/ontario-protecting-workers-and-employers-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020ke, December 9). *Ontario Making It Easier and Safer to Renew Driver's Licences*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59537/ontario-making-it-easier-and-safer-to-renew-drivers-licenses>
- Ontario. (2020kf, December 9). *Ontario Permanently Allowing Alcohol with Food Takeout and Delivery*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59542/ontario-permanently-allowing-alcohol-with-food-takeout-and-delivery>
- Ontario. (2020kg, December 9). *Province Expanding Homegrown Capacity with Made-In-Ontario Respirators and Masks*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59531/province-expanding-homegrown-capacity-with-made-in-ontario-respirators-and-masks>
- Ontario. (2020kh, December 10). *Connecting the North: A Draft Transportation Plan for Northern Ontario*. Ontario.Ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/connecting-north-draft-transportation-plan-northern-ontario>
- Ontario. (2020ki, December 10). *Governments Helping Ontario Agri-Food Businesses Increase Online Sales*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59560/governments-helping-ontario-agri-food-businesses-increase-online-sales>
- Ontario. (2020kj, December 10). *Ontario Expands Funding for Supportive Housing*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59549/ontario-expands-funding-for-supportive-housing>
- Ontario. (2020kk, December 10). *Ontario Extends COVID-19 Orders*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59551/ontario-extends-covid-19-orders-1>
- Ontario. (2020kl, December 10). *Ontario Supports Non-Profits Delivering Vital Services in Ottawa*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59556/ontario-supports-non-profits-delivering-vital-services-in-ottawa>
- Ontario. (2020km, December 11). *Ontario Begins Rollout of COVID-19 Vaccine*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59607/ontario-begins-rollout-of-covid-19-vaccine>

- Ontario. (2020kn, December 14). *Ontario Delivers First COVID-19 Vaccine in the Country.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/59635/ontario-delivers-first-covid-19-vaccines-to-frontline-health-workers>
- Ontario. (2020ko, December 14). *Ontario Orders New Management at Etobicoke Long-Term Care Home.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59644/ontario-orders-new-management-at-etobicoke-long-term-care-home>
- Ontario. (2020kp, December 14). *Ontario Updates Testing Guidelines for Outbound International Travellers.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59628/ontario-updates-testing-guidelines-for-outbound-international-travellers>
- Ontario. (2020kq, December 15). *Canada and Ontario invest in green infrastructure to support residents of Pays Plat First Nation and Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59654/canada-and-ontario-invest-in-green-infrastructure-to-support-residents-of-pays-plat-first-nation-and>
- Ontario. (2020kr, December 15). *Ontario Helping Workers Pursue Careers in Manufacturing.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59673/ontario-helping-workers-pursue-careers-in-manufacturing>
- Ontario. (2020ks, December 15). *Ontario Helps Municipalities and Indigenous Partners Respond to COVID-19.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59642/ontario-helps-municipalities-and-indigenous-partners-respond-to-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020kt, December 15). *Scarborough Health Network and Craiglee Nursing Home enter into Management Agreement.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59647/scarborough-health-network-and-craiglee-nursing-home-enter-into-management-agreement>
- Ontario. (2020ku, December 16). *Ontario Launches New “Support Local” Marketing Campaign.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59687/ontario-launches-new-support-local-marketing-campaign>
- Ontario. (2020kv, December 16). *Ontario Promotes Economic Prosperity in the North.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59683/ontario-promotes-economic-prosperity-in-the-north>
- Ontario. (2020kw, December 16). *Ontario Provides More Financial Relief for Municipalities during COVID-19.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59677/ontario-provides-more-financial-relief-for-municipalities-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020kx, December 16). *Ontario Supports Management Agreement Between Hamilton Health Sciences and Grace Villa Nursing Home.* <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59625/ontario-supports-management-agreement-between-hamilton-health-sciences-and-grace-villa-nursing-home-1>
- Ontario. (2020ky, December 16). *Ontario Unveils New Comprehensive Plan to Combat Poverty.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59692/ontario-unveils-new-comprehensive-plan-to-combat-poverty>
- Ontario. (2020kz, December 17). *Ontario Declares Santa Claus an Essential Service.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/59729/ontario-declares-santa-claus-an-essential-service>
- Ontario. (2020la, December 17). *Ontario Increasing Mental Health and Addictions Services.*
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59716/ontario-increasing-mental-health-and-addictions-services>

- Ontario. (2020lb, December 17). *Ontario Launches Historic Long-Term Care Staffing Plan*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59727/ontario-launches-historic-long-term-care-staffing-plan>
- Ontario. (2020lc, December 17). *Ontario Supports Employers and Employees Impacted by COVID-19*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59745/ontario-supports-employers-and-employees-impacted-by-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020ld, December 18). *Governments Support Beef Farmers and Protect Food Supply Chains*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59780/governments-support-beef-farmers-and-protect-food-supply-chains>
- Ontario. (2020le, December 18). *Ontario Expands COVID-19 Vaccine Locations*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59753/ontario-expands-covid-19-vaccine-locations>
- Ontario. (2020lf, December 18). *Ontario Investing in New Opportunities for Black Youth*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59757/ontario-investing-in-new-opportunities-for-black-youth>
- Ontario. (2020lg, December 18). *Ontario Supporting Shaw Centre During COVID-19*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59752/ontario-supporting-shaw-centre-during-covid-19>
- Ontario. (2020lh, December 18). *Ontario Supports Management Agreement Between Cambridge Memorial Hospital and Cambridge Country Manor*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59762/ontario-supports-management-agreement-between-cambridge-memorial-hospital-and-cambridge-country-mano>
- Ontario. (2020li, December 18). *Ontario Supports Production of Inclusive Made-in-Ontario Face Masks*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59756/ontario-supports-production-of-inclusive-made-in-ontario-face-masks>
- Ontario. (2020lj, December 21). *COVID-19: Provincewide shutdown*. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-provincewide-shutdown>
- Ontario. (2020lk, December 21). *Ontario Announces Provincewide Shutdown to Stop Spread of COVID-19 and Save Lives*. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59790/ontario-announces-provincewide-shutdown-to-stop-spread-of-covid-19-and-save-lives>
- Ontario. (2020ll, December 21). *Ontario Supporting High Priority Communities*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59793/ontario-supporting-high-priority-communities>
- Ontario. (2020lm, December 21). *Ontario Supports Management Agreement Between Markham Stouffville Hospital and Faith Manor Nursing Home*.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59792/ontario-supports-management-agreement-between-markham-stouffville-hospital-and-faith-manor-nursing-h>
- Ontario Auditor General. (2020, November 25). *COVID-19 Preparedness and Management Special Report: Office of the Auditor General of Ontario*. <https://www.auditor.on.ca/>
- Ontario Health. (n.d.). *Our Story | Ontario Health*. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <https://www.ontariohealth.ca/our-story>
- Ontario Health. (2020, March 19). *ONTHealth on Twitter: "We all have a role to play to reduce the spread of #COVID19ON, including #SocialDistancing. Some measures we are taking: Expanding testing capacity and limiting in-person visits for health card renewals. https://t.co/F6fBcPANLP"*

- <https://t.co/LqlygS8cyg> / Twitter. Twitter.
<https://twitter.com/onthealth/status/1240797197723197441>
- Ontario Health Coalition. (2020). *RESOURCES: List of Ontario COVID-19 Assessment Centres & Their Individual Criteria - Ontario Health Coalition*.
<https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/resources-list-of-ontario-covid-19-assessment-centres-their-individual-criteria/>
- Ontario, M. of H. and L.-T. C. (n.d.-b). *Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)*. Government of Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/lhin/default.aspx>
- Ontario Ombudsman. (2020, June 1). *Ontario Ombudsman to investigate government's oversight of long-term care homes during pandemic*. <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/resources/news/press-releases/2020/ontario-ombudsman-to-investigate-government%E2%80%99s-oversight-of-long-term-care-homes-during-pandemic>
- Osorio, C. (2020, December 23). *Urgent plea for doctors goes out at Toronto-area nursing home hit by COVID-19*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ltc-home-with-145-covid-19-patients-puts-out-mayday-call-as-it-runs/>
- Ottawa Public Health. (2020, March 30). *Self-Isolation Instructions for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Ottawa Public Health. <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/self-isolation-instructions-for-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx>
- Pazzano, J., & Hill, B. (2020, October 2). *The COVID Alert app isn't working as well as it should be, and Canadians are part of the problem* | *Globalnews.ca*.
<https://globalnews.ca/news/7372173/covid-alert-app-canada-problem/>
- PCMCH. (2020). *Maternal-Neonatal COVID-19 Information*. <https://www.pcmch.on.ca/health-care-providers/maternity-care/maternal-neonatal-covid-19-information/>
- Peel. (2020). *Going to school during COVID-19—Coronavirus—Region of Peel*.
<https://www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/schools/>
- PHAC. (2004, November 8). *Learning from SARS: Renewal of public health in Canada – Report of the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health* [Assessments;guidance]. Aem.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/reports-publications/learning-sars-renewal-public-health-canada.html>
- PHAC. (2020a, March 25). *New Order Makes Self-Isolation Mandatory for Individuals Entering Canada* [News releases]. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2020/03/new-order-makes-self-isolation-mandatory-for-individuals-entering-canada.html>
- PHAC. (2020b, March 26). *Interim national surveillance guidelines for human infection with Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)* [Guidance]. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-surveillance-human-infection.html>
- PHAC. (2020c, March 29). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Testing*. Public Health Ontario.
[https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Laboratory Services/Test Information Index/Wuhan Novel Coronavirus](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Laboratory%20Services/Test%20Information%20Index/Wuhan%20Novel%20Coronavirus)
- PHO. (2020a). *Leadership Team* | *Public Health Ontario*.
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/about/our-organization/leadership-team>

- PHO. (2020b). *Introducing Race, Income, Household Size, and Language Data Collection: A Resource for Case Managers*. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/main/2020/06/introducing-race-income-household-size-language-data-collection.pdf?la=en>
- PHO. (2020c, June 18). *COVID-19 Public Resources*. Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/Diseases and Conditions/Infectious Diseases/Respiratory Diseases/Novel Coronavirus/Public Resources>
- PHO. (2020d). *Cohorting in Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings*. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/cong/2020/06/focus-on-cohorting-outbreaks-congregate-living-settings.pdf?la=en>
- PHO. (2020e). *IPHS User Guide*. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/I/2019/iphis-user-guide-respiratory.pdf?la=en>
- Raymond, T. (2020, April 3). *Ontario launches online COVID-19 test results portal, gives new staffing powers to public health units* | CTV News. <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ontario-launches-online-covid-19-test-results-portal-gives-new-staffing-powers-to-public-health-units-1.4880874>
- Rodrigues, G. (2020, December 17). *Ontario reports more than 2,400 new coronavirus cases setting another one-day record*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/7527928/ontario-coronavirus-cases-december-17-covid19/>
- Russell, A. (2020, March 26). *At least 2 Toronto hospitals begin rationing protective gear as COVID-19 crisis deepens*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6731507/coronavirus-ontario-hospitals-protective-gear-rationing-covid-19/>
- Science Table. (2020a). *About Us*. <https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/about/>
- Science Table. (2020b). *Update on COVID-19 Projections*. https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Evidence-on-COVID-19-Pandemic_2020.12.18-Final-1.pdf
- SickKids. (2020, June 15). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information*. <http://www.sickkids.ca/skmobile/infection--prevention-and-control/index.html>
- St. Michael's Hospital. (2020, October 21). *Indigenous led COVID-19 testing centre opens in Toronto at Na-Me-Res*. St. Michael's Hospital. https://www.stmichaelshospital.com/media/detail.php?source=hospital_news/2020/1021
- Toronto. (2020a, June 6). *COVID-19: Orders, Directives & Bylaws* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada). City of Toronto; City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-orders-directives-by-laws/>
- Toronto. (2020b, September 12). *Toronto's COVID-19 voluntary isolation centre officially opens* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada). City of Toronto; City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/news/torontos-covid-19-voluntary-isolation-centre-officially-opens/>
- Toronto Public Health. (2020). *COVID-19 Decision Tool for Schools*. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/9858-COVID-19-Decision-Guide-for-Schools.pdf>
- Treble, P. (2020, May 26). *What's inside the disturbing report on Ontario's long-term-care homes—Macleans.ca*. Macleans. <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/whats-inside-the-disturbing-report-on-ontarios-long-term-care-homes/>
- Trihn, J. (2020, March 26). *Ottawa Hospital rationing surgical masks to avoid shortage*. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-hospital-rations-surgical-masks-1.5511549>

- Troster, A. (2020, October 20). *Ontario's COVID-19 Response Has Been Shockingly Anti-Child (Opinion)*. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/ontario-covid-response-impact-child_ca_5f8f231cc5b6dc2d17fac784
- Tsekouras, P. (2020a, June 2). *Ontario pledges \$2.8 million to local personal protective equipment producers*. Toronto. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-pledges-2-8-million-to-local-personal-protective-equipment-producers-1.4964924>
- Tsekouras, P. (2020b, November 29). *"These antics help no one": More than \$47,000 in fines issued following house party in Mississauga, Ont.* | CTV News. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/these-antics-help-no-one-more-than-47-000-in-fines-issued-following-house-party-in-mississauga-ont-1.5209374>
- TTC. (2020a, March 21). *TTC COVID-19 FAQs*. http://www.ttc.ca/Riding_the_TTC/Safety_and_Security/COVID-19_FAQ.jsp
- TTC. (2020b, June 30). *Changes coming to TTC operations on July 2*. http://www.ttc.ca/News/2020/June/30_06_20NR_TTC_operations.jsp
- UWO. (2020, September 13). *September 13—September 13—Western University*. <https://www.uwo.ca/coronavirus/updates/sept13.html>
- Warnica, R. (2020a, May 1). *Jane Philpott on life inside the care home where 95 per cent of the residents have COVID-19*. National Post. <https://nationalpost.com/news/jane-philpott-on-life-inside-the-care-home-where-95-per-cent-of-the-residents-have-covid-19>
- Warnica, R. (2020b, June 23). *Public Health Ontario suffered exodus of senior leaders and budget cuts before the COVID-19 pandemic struck*. Nationalpost. <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/covid-19-public-health-ontario-budget-cuts>
- Westoll, N. (2020, March 27). *Coronavirus: Up to 3,250 ventilators ready to be deployed in Ontario, officials say*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6742260/coronavirus-ontario-hospitals-ventilators-covid-19/>
- Yang, J. (2020a, March 29). *Ontario developing 'last resort' guidelines on which patients to prioritize if hospitals are overwhelmed by critical COVID-19 cases*. The Star. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/03/29/ontario-developing-last-resort-guidelines-on-which-patients-to-prioritize-if-hospitals-are-overwhelmed-by-critical-covid-19-cases.html>
- Yang, J. (2020b, December 9). *Shelley Deeks, the Public Health Ontario whistleblower on colour-coded COVID restrictions, is leaving for a job in Nova Scotia*. Thestar.Com. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/12/09/shelley-deeks-the-public-health-ontario-whistleblower-on-colour-coded-covid-restrictions-is-leaving-for-a-job-in-nova-scotia.html>
- Yang, J., & Allen, K. (2020, November 11). *Ontario rejected its own public health agency's advice when it launched its colour-coded plan for COVID-19 restrictions* | The Star. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/11/11/ontario-rejected-its-own-public-health-agencys-advice-when-it-launched-its-colour-coded-plan-for-covid-19-restrictions.html>

Appendix A. Key Resources

Government of Ontario: COVID-19 (coronavirus) website	https://covid-19.ontario.ca/
Government of Ontario Newsroom	https://news.ontario.ca/en
Government of Ontario: COVID-19 public health measures and restrictions.	https://covid-19.ontario.ca/zones-and-restrictions
Government of Ontario Together: help fight coronavirus.	https://covid-19.ontario.ca/how-your-organization-can-help-fight-coronaviru
Government of Ontario: Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19.	https://budget.ontario.ca/2020/marchupdate/index.html
Government of Ontario: COVID-19 school and child care screening	https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/
Government of Ontario: Frontline and business support webpage	https://www.ontario.ca/page/frontline-business-help-us-support-you-during-covid-19
Price gouging reporting webpage	https://www.ontario.ca/form/report-price-gouging-related-covid-19

Appendix B. Framework for Ontario's Re-closing Strategy

Table 2. Framework for Ontario's re-closing strategy: indicators

Level	Indicators (Original)	Modified Indicators
Green – Prevent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence <10 per 100,000 • Percent positivity <1% • Reproductive number <1 • Stable number of cases without epidemiologic link • Limited outbreaks and community transmission • Adequate hospital and ICU capacity • Adequate case/contact follow-up within 24 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent positivity <0.5%
Yellow – Protect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence 10 – 39.9 per 100,000 • Percent positivity 1 – 2.5% • Reproductive number ~1 • Stable or increasing number of cases without epi link • Repeated outbreaks in multiple sectors/settings or increasing number of large outbreaks • Stable or increasing community transmission • Adequate hospital and ICU capacity • Adequate case/contact follow-up within 24 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence 10 – 24.9 per 100,000 • Percent positivity 0.5 – 1.2%
Orange – Restrict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence 40 – 99.9 per 100,000 • Percent positivity 2.5 – 9.9% • Reproductive number 1 – 1.1 • Adequate case and contact follow-up within 24 hours, or at risk of becoming overwhelmed • Other indicators as outlined in Yellow – Protect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence 25 – 39.9 per 100,000 • Percent positivity 1.3 – 2.4%
Red – Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence ≥100 per 100,000 • Percent positivity ≥10% • Reproductive number ≥1.2 • Increasing number of cases without an epi link • Repeated outbreaks in multiple sectors/settings or increasing number of large outbreaks • Increasing levels of community transmission • Hospital/ICU capacity at risk of being overwhelmed • Case/contact management capacity at risk of becoming overwhelmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence ≥40 per 100,000 • Percent positivity ≥2.5%
Grey – Lockdown	<p>“Trends to continue to worsen after measures from control level are implemented”</p>	<p>Adverse trends after entering Red, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing incidence and/or test positivity, especially among people 70+ • Increasing outbreaks among vulnerable populations, such as residents of LTC • Hospital and ICU capacity at risk of being overwhelmed • Case and contact management capacity at risk or overwhelmed

Table 3. Framework for Ontario's re-closing strategy: public health measures

Level	Sector-Specific Measures	
	Gatherings (with distancing)	Food/drink establishments
Green – Prevent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain events/gatherings at private residences, such as parties: 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors • Other events/gatherings, such as businesses: 50 people indoors and 100 outdoors • Wedding, funeral and other religious ceremonies: 30% capacity indoors, 100 people outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrons must remain seated • 2m or a barrier between seats • Activities permitted, with restrictions (e.g. no Karaoke in private rooms) • Contact information of patrons must be collected • No buffets • Face coverings required, except when eating/drinking • Night clubs can only operate as a restaurant or bar
Yellow – Protect	Same as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must close 12am-5am • Liquor can only be served 9am-11pm • Liquor cannot be consumed 12am-9am • Maximum 6 people seated together • Lower music volume to permit conversations using a speaking voice • Mandatory safety plan
Orange – Restrict	Same as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum capacity 50 patrons indoors • Must close 10pm-5am • Liquor can only be served 9am-9pm • Liquor cannot be consumed 10pm-9am • Patrons must be screened • Maximum 4 people seated together • Strip clubs must close, or only operate as a restaurant or bar
Red – Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All gatherings capped at 5 people indoors, 25 outdoors • No change to capacity limits for religious services, weddings, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum 10 patrons indoors • Dancing, singing and love music prohibited • Alcohol permitted with deliveries and take-out
Grey – Lockdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indoor gatherings permitted; a maximum of 10 people outdoors. • Religious services, weddings, etc.: a maximum of 10 people indoors or outdoors 	Indoor and outdoor service prohibited; only take-out, drive through and delivery permitted.

The views expressed by the authors are not intended to represent the views of the North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.



Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies with support from a number of individuals, including:

Tiffany Fitzpatrick

Nessika Karsenti

Madeline King

Anna Kurdina

Antonina Maltsev

Sara Allin

Gregory Marchildon

Monika Roerig

Suggested citation

North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. (2020). North American COVID-19 Policy Response Monitor: Ontario. Toronto, Canada: North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.

About NAO

The North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (NAO) is a collaborative partnership of interested researchers, research organizations, governments, and health organizations promoting evidence-informed health system policy decision-making.

© North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2020

Contact Information

North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies
155 College Street, Suite 425
Toronto, ON M5T 3M6



www.uoft.me/NAObservatory



naobservatory@utoronto.ca



[nao_health](https://twitter.com/nao_health)