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GOVERNMENT OF CANADA MAKES RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS AVAILABLE

Vaccination coverage is high and increasing, but international evidence shows that sustained public health measures are needed to prevent resurgence of COVID-19 driven by Variants of Concern (VOC) especially in non-and under-vaccinated populations. Testing, screening, tracing and isolation remain critical for monitoring levels of COVID-19 in the community, monitoring variants of concern as well as detecting and managing outbreaks.

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, announced that more than 2000 local pharmacies have registered to distribute rapid antigen tests to small and medium-sized businesses and non-profit organizations – this includes independent pharmacies, Rexall, Sobeys and Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacies in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. Increasing local distribution points of rapid antigen tests makes it easier for small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) to implement workplace screening for their frontline employees and those returning to work in person. The

Government of Canada is providing free rapid tests for this initiative; however, pharmacies may charge a small handling fee for each box of 25 tests.

Along with other public health measures such as mask wearing, hand hygiene, and vaccination, rapid testing is an important layer of protection against COVID-19. It can be used as a screening tool to help protect workers, families and communities while helping keep workplaces safe and the economy running. Rapid tests can be done easily and safely at work to help identify people who may be infected with COVID-19, but have no symptoms. Individuals can get results in as little as 15 minutes.

The Government of Canada is expanding the distribution of free rapid tests through a one-stop portal by making it easier for SMOs to find a local pharmacy that is distributing rapid antigen tests in their community. SMOs in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario will be given the option of obtaining tests a pharmacy.

Today's announcement pro-

vides additional support to communities, building on their current public health efforts. The Government of Canada continues to secure and provide rapid tests to provinces and territories for use in long-term care facilities, schools and workplaces.

"The Government of Canada is putting the health and safety of Canadians first. We are proud to be working with our partners to support workplaces and their employees so that they can safely reopen and operate. We are all in this together. Along with continuing to be vigilant with public health measures, and as vaccines continue to roll out across Canada, testing and screening are an added layer of protection and are critical to help slow the spread of COVID-19, and safely reopen the economy."

The Honourable Patty Hajdu
 Minister of Health

"Giving businesses access to rapid tests kits quickly through a pharmacy portal is a welcome addition to the various provincial programs targeted at stopping spread of COVID-19. This initiative complements Ontario sources for free rapid testing kits, such as

the Provincial Antigen Screening Program portal or by contacting a participating local chamber of commerce or board of trade. We can all continue to do our part to stop the spread and save lives." The Honourable Vic Fedeli
 Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Ontario

"Ontario small businesses are the heart of our neighbourhoods and the economic foun-

ation of our communities. Providing small businesses greater access to rapid test kits through a pharmacy portal is a welcome addition to Ontario's free rapid test initiatives for businesses. Added together, these programs are good for the economy and help keep workers and families safe."

The Honourable Nina Tangri
 Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, Ontario

"Saskatchewan is committed to supporting small and medium-sized businesses as they manage ongoing COVID-19 challenges. This initiative will help businesses easily access rapid testing for their employees to improve safety for staff and customers along with helping prevent outbreaks." The Honourable Paul Merriman
 Saskatchewan Minister of Health

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**DURHAM'S WATER CONTINUES TO BE SAFE TO DRINK DESPITE ODOURS**

Whitby, Ontario – The Regional Municipality of Durham would like to assure residents that our water continues to be safe to drink despite possible earthy or musty odours detected recently. Taste and odour episodes are caused by seasonal biological changes in Lake Ontario and typically occur in the late summer or early fall.

**When:** Typically occurs in the late summer or early fall. Although it is difficult to predict when conditions will return to normal, taste and odour episodes will generally fade away after the lake water temperatures decrease.

**What:** Possible earthy or musty odours detected in drinking water.

**Why:** Taste and odour episodes are caused by seasonal biological changes in Lake Ontario, especially during hot weather. Geosmin and 2-Methylisoborneol (MIB)—naturally occurring compounds in Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe—are not harmful to public health and the Region's water quality is not otherwise affected.

Laboratory testing of both the raw and treated water confirms that municipal water meets all Ontario Drinking Water Quality Management Standards as set by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

To reduce the taste and odour in the drinking water residents can refrigerate a jug of water, or add ice cubes and a few drops of lemon juice to the water.

For more information about the municipal water supply systems in Durham Region, visit [durham.ca/water](http://durham.ca/water). Water Quality Reports are available online at [durham.ca](http://durham.ca).