

Good afternoon, everyone. Bonjour.

We are here today to report that Ottawa Public Health now has laboratory confirmation of community spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Ottawa. We have 27 laboratory confirmed cases (either confirmed or indeterminate) reported in Ottawa today. 5 have no known travel history, link to someone who traveled or close contact with a confirmed case. We are starting to see cases among healthcare workers. Based on modelling data, there could now be up to 4000 cases of COVID-19 in our community. Because most cases are mild and undetected, I want to emphasize the importance of everyone treating all interactions with others as a potential source of transmission of COVID-19.

At this time, I am asking that ALL people ensure they are practicing social distancing. I am happy to clarify what this means, as some people think it means continuing to visit with friends.

Gatherings of 1 is the best, not 50, not 10.

Our efforts are needed as a community. The actions you take will affect not only you, but your loved ones, and our most vulnerable. While we appreciate that people are thinking of their loved ones – grandma and grandpa, friends and family – now is not the time to visit them in person. Find other creative ways through video chats, or telephone calls to connect with your loved ones.

Now is also not the time for non-essential excursions. We are working with the City to provide greater clarity on what we consider non-essential vs essential businesses here in Ottawa. What I want to emphasize is that people should not visit non-essential businesses including, but not limited to, clothing and, hair and nail salons, tattoo parlours, gyms and fitness facilities, car dealerships and repair facilities, banquet halls and conference centres.

Many people are returning home from travelling during March Break and people may need to get groceries and essential items. But this is the time to self-isolate and ask family or friends to pick up your groceries for you. Not everyone may have received this message though we have provided airports with greater messaging. We have detailed guidance about what self-isolation means on our website. Visit [ottawapublichealth.ca/Coronavirus](http://ottawapublichealth.ca/Coronavirus).

Social distancing is important for everyone at this time, but especially important for our older adult community (55+).

Here are some ways that you and your family can should practise social distancing:

- Talk to your supervisor, manager, or employer about the possibility of working from home where possible

- Avoid visiting elderly friends or relatives. Use the telephone, video chats or social media to stay connected unless the visit is absolutely essential
- Avoid all non-essential trips in the community
- Keep the windows down if you have to go into the community for an essential trip via taxi or rideshare
- Cancel group gatherings
- Hold virtual meetings or get-togethers
- Spend time outside and in settings where people can maintain a 2-metre (6 feet) distance from each other

You can still go outside to take a walk, go to the park, or walk your dog. If you need groceries, go to the store. We simply recommend that while outside you make sure to avoid crowds and maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from those around you.

It is important for residents to continue to follow normal precautions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you have just cleaned your hands
- Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue or into your arm, not your hand

If you need help with this or need other social supports, our community partners are working together through the City's Human Needs Task Force. Organizations like:

- The Good Companions are offering Seniors Centre Without Walls, where seniors can dial in and partake in a virtual centre with activities.
- The Ottawa Food Bank and community food banks are all working hard to ensure food is still available to those that need it.
- Call 2-1-1 to find out more and get connected to these wonderful community partners.

I would like to remind residents just how important it is that we continue to support each other in our community through this situation, and to seek out accurate updates. Please continue to visit: [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus](https://OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus)