

Community Paramedic Program Conducting In-Home COVID-19 Testing for Higher-Risk Individuals

The Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) is collaborating with local EMS to implement a special Community Paramedic Program in preparation for the potential increase in COVID-19 cases in the area. The new program aims to provide faster access to testing and assessments for individuals who are at higher risk, such as seniors and people with underlying health conditions, while reducing the strain on 911 services and hospital emergency rooms. Assessing and testing higher-risk individuals at home will also help reduce the possibility of spreading the virus in hospitals and doctors' offices, as well as the larger community.

"With an increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Ontario and across Canada, we anticipate that there will be a growing need for COVID-19 testing and assessments in our community as well," says Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, Medical Officer of Health. "We're hoping that a mobile testing/assessment service will help reduce the number of people calling 911 and visiting hospital emergency rooms, unless they require urgent care."

In-home testing/assessments will only be offered to more vulnerable individuals who meet the Ministry of Health's criteria. Residents who think they have COVID-19 symptoms and who are age 70 or older, or who have compromised immune systems or chronic health conditions should call the EOHU at 613-933-1375 or 1-800-267-7120. They should not call EMS or 911 unless they have severe symptoms and require urgent care.

Public health nurses are staffing the EOHU phone line 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. They will assess symptoms and provide instructions to callers. These could include recommendations to self-monitor, self-isolate or seek medical care.

Based on the telephone assessment, if testing may be required for an individual at higher risk, the EOHU will coordinate with the Community Paramedic Program to send a paramedic to the individual's home to conduct an assessment and if needed, a COVID-19 test.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.EOHU.ca.

-30-

For more information about this press release, please contact Sandra Labelle at 613-933-1375, ext. 1218.