

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, July 31, 2020

Temporary COVID-19 Assessment Centre for hospitality and tourism staff to help ease pressures at existing sites

Niagara Health will open a temporary COVID-19 Assessment Centre in Niagara Falls to test workers in the hospitality and tourism industry, scheduled to begin Wednesday, August 5.

“The hospitality and tourism sector employs thousands of people in the region. Opening an Assessment Centre dedicated to testing these workers will help prevent overcrowding and reduce wait times for the public at our three existing centres in St. Catharines, Welland, and Niagara Falls,” says Derek McNally, Executive Vice-President Clinical Services and Chief Nursing Executive.

High volumes of patients coming for testing has caused a spike in wait times, sometimes lasting up to two hours for walk-ins. On Monday, Niagara Health’s Assessment Centres saw more than 550 patients, including 300 walk-ins.

Niagara Health is working with its partners at the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara Falls Tourism and the Scotiabank Convention Centre on this initiative.

“The time is now to make sure our families with jobs in hospitality can proceed confidently and safely back to work. For the 40,000 people who rely on their jobs in tourism here, not going to work and surviving on CERB alone is no longer an option. They want and need to work to earn money to support their families and pay their mortgages. This innovative testing centre established by Niagara Falls Tourism and Niagara Health is part of our City’s Back to Business Recovery and is in line with protocols established in our safetoplay.ca program. We are committed to providing every assurance that the safety and health of employees, visitors and residents in Niagara Falls remains the highest priority,” says Jim Diodati, Mayor of the City of Niagara Falls

The temporary assessment centre will operate out of the parking lot at the Scotiabank Convention Centre. Niagara Falls Tourism will provide administrative support for centre, working with local employers to coordinate the names, dates and appointment times of those individuals to be tested. The temporary centre will only be available to those who have booked an appointment through Niagara Falls Tourism.

“Niagara Falls Tourism is pleased to be able to assist the professionals from Niagara Health as they deliver a valuable service to the community,” says Janice Thomson, President and CEO of Niagara Falls Tourism.

Dr. Karim Ali, Niagara Health’s Director of Infectious Diseases, says it’s important to remember that testing represents a snapshot in time. “Following important safety measures such as maintaining a safe physical distance from others, cleaning your hands regularly, and wearing a mask where appropriate, is the best way to protect yourself and slow the spread of infection.”

The most efficient way for members of the public not working in the hospitality and tourism industry to be tested for COVID-19 is to call 905-378-4647 ext. 42819 (4-CV19) and book an appointment. Assessment Centres will accept walk-ins; however, they are subject to a wait while administrative procedures are completed. For more information on Niagara Health’s Assessment Centres available to the public, please [click here](#).

Media Contact:

Brett Sweeney, Manager of Communications
Niagara Health
905-378-4647 ext. 43874
brett.sweeney@niagarahealth.on.ca

Carey Campbell, Manager, Office of the Mayor & CAO
City of Niagara Falls
905-356-7521 ext. 4206
ccampbell@niagarafalls.ca