



## Prioritizing Seniors for Testing and Vaccination

November 3, 2020

Premier Ford / Hon. Christine Elliott

The Government of Ontario has taken the system approach to addressing Covid-19 in the province. The focus has been on protecting healthcare system capacity. This is evident by the prioritization of testing for healthcare workers and first responders and PPE diversion. For individuals, the Ministry of Health has recognized that underlying health considerations are a priority e.g. cancer and dialysis patients, newborns, and those living in nursing homes.

We are asking the Ontario Ministry of Health to prioritize Covid-19 testing, Influenza vaccination and Covid-19 vaccinations (when they become available) for all Seniors in Ontario.

- Seniors in Ontario (above age 60) represent 37% of the total infections reported. They represent 95.4% of reported deaths. (MOH Oct 8, 2020).
- Seniors, living in the community (not in assisted care settings), have co-morbidities or underlying health issues that are managed and represent more than 90% of the senior population in Ontario.
- Public Health Ontario, in a report titled COVID-19 Case Fatality, Case Identification, and Attack Rates in Ontario, with data to May 17<sup>th</sup>, stated that Seniors (over age 60) represented the largest group of undetected cases.
- Seniors are a vulnerable population and often lack the support of family because of geography, are on fixed incomes and often have to risk exposure to access drugs and supplies, because they can't afford delivery or personal shoppers.
- Seniors are a vulnerable population by the nature of their age. The mortality rate shows a direct corollary to seniors and their ability to fight the disease. (MOH Oct 8, 2020)
- The mortality rate in long term care settings proves that those with co-morbidity are at high risk.
- Early detection allows for a treatment plan addressing the comorbidities, coherent care direction from the patient, aggressive treatment, support for the individual and possible in-home care with support.

The Ontario governments phased approach has created a divide. The threat of infection still exists and seniors, who have a greater chance of death, have to compete with a much more mobile and less vulnerable sector of the population.



## Prioritizing Seniors for Testing and Vaccination

During the height of the first wave, special hours of access were made by retailers to help protect the most vulnerable of the population; seniors. We are asking that this be continued by the government.

Direct health units to use venues that are currently closed e.g. community centers, arenas, etc. which are large enough to create social distancing seating for those not mobile. They can't wait in line in the cold.

- Use them for testing seniors.
- 32% of seniors don't use the internet (Stats Canada, Evolving Internet Use among Canadian Seniors, July 10, 2019). They can't book online for appointments. Make allowances for this.
- Direct the high dose flu shots and vaccines to these venues for distribution. With greater frequency, seniors are going to their local drug store, risking illness, only to be told they don't have the high dose flu vaccine.
- When the vaccine for Covid-19 is released, prioritize the most vulnerable; seniors, for priority vaccination and use these venues to centralize delivery and protect them.

The Police Pensioners' Association believes that prioritizing seniors will divert hospital stays related to complications of Covid-19, is financially responsible and will decrease mortality rates.

The time to act is now!

Police Pensioners' Association of Ontario