



Health Canada and the Public  
Health Agency of Canada

Santé Canada et l'Agence  
de la santé publique du Canada

Canada

# Rapid Tests for COVID-19 Screening in the Workplace

April 2021



# Agenda

1. Background on rapid testing
2. New initiative to increase availability of rapid tests for workplace screening
3. Next steps
4. Questions and answers

# Goal

Dramatically increase rapid screening in workplaces across Canada, as an additional mechanism to reduce transmission and outbreaks

## Background

- The Government of Canada has purchased over 40M point of care tests and distributed over half to provinces and territories. Most of these tests have been deployed in long-term care facilities, schools or for outbreak management
- The Government of Canada is putting in place additional contracts with vendors for additional supply of rapid screening kits to meet Canada's public health needs
- Acceleration and expansion of the deployment of rapid tests for Covid screening was recommended by experts:
  - [Testing and Screening Expert Panel's first report](#)
  - [Industry Advisory Roundtable on COVID-19 Testing, Screening, Tracing and Data Management](#), and
  - PHAC's [Interim Guidance on the Use of Rapid Antigen Detection Tests](#)
- Workplace screening has been extensively piloted by organizations in several provinces
- Some provinces have released guidance regarding screening and who can administer a test, with Ontario recently authorizing self-collection

# Rapid tests and the benefits screening

## What are rapid antigen tests?

- Easy to administer
- Now with nasal swabs
- Results in 15 minutes
- Most effective at identifying those with high viral load and high transmission potential
- A negative result cannot be interpreted as a negative diagnosis
- A positive result is confirmed with PCR test
- Those with symptoms always referred for PCR test



## Regular screening (e.g., 2x/week) helps organizations to:

- Better protect their employees
- Better protect their customers / clients
- Contribute to community safety by reducing community spread
- Add an extra layer of protection in addition to other public health measures



# How does the initiative work in the early phase?

- **The Government of Canada** will:

- work with industry associations to prioritize intake organizations
- supply rapid screening tests at no cost (tests may also be available from relevant provinces and territories)

- **Organizations** will be responsible for:

- setting up rapid screening program
- administering screening
- collecting and reporting on usage data
- following all relevant provincial/territorial and local public health regulations and guidance

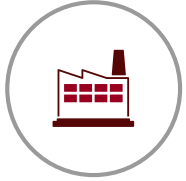
Step-by-step rapid screening program implementation booklets are available from [Communitech](#) and [Creative Destruction Lab](#)



**CREATIVE DESTRUCTION LAB**  
Rapid Screening Consortium

# How will workplaces be assessed for suitability?

In early stages, will need to prioritize participants as supply and programs ramp



## Critical industries

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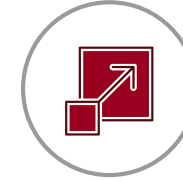
Those deemed essential services and functions by Public Safety Canada ([Source](#))



## Close-contact workers

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Employees whose roles fundamentally involve interactions fellow employees and customers



## Organizational readiness

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Prepared to start screening immediately and scale to their employee bases quickly

*Focus will be on **national organizations** best supplied federally vs. from multiple provinces, or organizations unable to secure supply from relevant province/territory*

*Additionally, will consider geographic **hot spots**, the **diversity** across geographies and sectors (for-profit and non-profit) and benefits for **vulnerable populations** (e.g., Indigenous groups)*

# Rapid screening implementation considerations



**Identify Human Resources requirements** (program coordinator, testing personnel, etc.)



**Procure necessary PPE and sanitation supplies** for testing personnel (masks, face shields, etc.)



**Consult local public health regulations** and other requirements (e.g., who can administer tests)



**Establish data infrastructure** (for reporting, security, privacy)



**Develop communications plan** for roll-out and engage employees

*Non-exhaustive – for discussion purposes only*

# Who can administer a rapid test?

Province	Trained layperson can administer?	Self-administration?	Ability to start workplace screening without approval?
<u>Ontario</u>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<u>Alberta</u>	Yes*	Yes	No
<u>Saskatchewan</u>	Yes	Yes	No
<u>Nova Scotia</u>	Yes	No	No
Others	No	No	No

\* However, a healthcare professional must oversee the workplace screening program

As of April 6, 2021 – please consult provincial guidance directly



# Next steps

- **Associations** will work with members to identify organizations that meet the early phase prioritization criteria
- **Associations** are asked to collate information and provide to Government of Canada
- Government of Canada will contact **organizations**
- In the meantime, **organizations** are encouraged to:
  - leverage the collective resource available on the [Government of Canada website](#)
  - understand relevant local, provincial and territorial public health regulations
  - review playbooks such as those by [Communitech](#) and the [Creative Destruction Lab Rapid Screening Consortium](#) to understand what is entailed in setting up a screening program

# Information required to support requests

- Number of critical workers in close-contact settings that will be screened
- Nature of workers to be screened (in terms of their level of contact, their criticality, vulnerability, etc.)
- Locations at which screening will occur
- Requested number of tests for first month
- Confirmation that arrangements have been made for administration
- Confirmation that the requesting organization is not receiving the requested tests from relevant provincial or territorial governments

## Moving forward

- As the supply of tests increases, organizations may be able to order directly from vendors
- Screening continues to add an additional layer of protection in addition to vaccinations, PPE, etc.
- New technologies on the horizon may facilitate self-administered / home kits and potentially reduce the costs of regular testing

- **Questions and Answers**



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**Thank You**

