

**Ministry of Health**Health Programs and Delivery  
Division

Laboratories and Diagnostics Branch

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73-2023-5921

**DATE:** June 2, 2023

**TO:** Long-Term Care Licensees

**FROM:** Ms. Neeta Sarta  
Director  
Laboratories and Diagnostics Branch

**SUBJECT:** **Extended access for COVID-19 rapid antigen testing until December 31, 2023**

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The temporary Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP) and Rapid Antigen Test Public Distribution Program played a pivotal role in the province's emergency pandemic response by providing people with easy access to free rapid antigen tests (RATs) when COVID-19 infection volumes were at their peak and extensive access to testing was essential to stopping its spread.

With the lower rates of COVID-19, high vaccination rates, and demand for RATs has been consistently decreasing, the province will be winding down its RAT programs starting June 30, 2023.

While some groups will exit the program on June 30, 2023, we are providing you and other partners that represent groups at highest risk for severe outcomes for COVID-19 continued access to free tests. All long-term care homes will have continued access to tests during the extended access period (July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023). Long-term care homes are invited to continue to place orders using existing systems and processes.

Unused or expired tests cannot be returned to any central government warehouse due to quality control considerations. Program participants are encouraged to review [the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks \(MECP\) guidelines](#) regarding the proper and safe disposal of waste from RATs, including unused and/ or expired RAT kits. Information on manufacturer [expiry date extensions](#) can be found on the Ontario Health website.

Ontario's COVID-19 testing strategy will increasingly focus on molecular testing tools, which can be accessed at pharmacies and many other locations across Ontario. Individuals who qualify for testing can find a location close to them at: <https://www.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations>.

Program participants can contact the ministry at [PASP@ontario.ca](mailto:PASP@ontario.ca) for more information about the wind down of the programs.

Thank you again for your support to these important provincial initiatives. These efforts were a significant part of our COVID-19 response, and we extend our thanks to the program partners, administrators, and staff who continue to support this work.

Sincerely,

**“Originally signed by”**

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Neeta Sarta

c: Jeff Butler, Assistant Deputy Minister, LTC Operations Division, Ministry of Long-Term Care