

# TORONTO

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## **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Advisory**

**April 15, 2003**

Tourism Toronto – The Toronto Convention & Visitors Association reports that public health officials continue to advise that the risk of contracting SARS in Toronto remains extremely low. The following is the most current information available as of **April 15**. Sources include: [Toronto Public Health](#), [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) and [Health Canada](#). For all SARS updates, please visit [Tourism Toronto](#).

### **FACTS:**

- Dr. Sheela Basrur, Toronto's [Chief Medical Officer of Health](#) advises that the risk of SARS transmission among the general population is extremely low and extensive and strong measures are in place to prevent any further spread of the disease.
- Dr. D'Cuhna, Ontario's Commissioner of Public Health and [Chief Medical Officer of Health](#) states, "Ontario remains a healthy and safe travel destination."
- [Ontario's Ministry of Health](#) has advised that **85** patients receiving treatment for SARS have been discharged from the hospital.
- At a Toronto press conference on April 9, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) received a verbal commitment from Ontario Public Safety Commissioner Dr. James Young at the Provincial Operations Command Unit that physician meetings may proceed as planned.
- [Tourism and Recreation Minister Brian Coburn](#) announced his Ministry's plans to establish a recovery program, starting: "We want to let Americans know they are welcome in Canada and caution everyone against over-reacting to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome as the risk of contracting SARS is extremely low."
- The US-based [National Association of School Psychologists](#) say they decided to hold a scheduled convention in Toronto because there was "no real threat" to their safety. "To cancel the convention without a safety reason would be counter-intuitive to the kinds of work that we do," said Susan Gorin, Executive Director of the US National Association of School Psychologists. This conference was held in Toronto April 8-12.
- [The International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine](#) have reaffirmed that their conference will be in Toronto May 10-16, with approximately 4,000 delegates attending from around world.
- [National Tour Association](#) member Kevin Hicks, president of The KMH Group Inc., welcomed a group with Performance Tours to Toronto last week. "They had a wonderful time, all fears were alleviated when they arrived and saw the normal state of the city and our people", said Hicks.
- Key events have taken place and are taking place as scheduled, such as: [The Industrial Accident Prevention Association](#) is proceeding with its conference of 8,500 people April 14-16, which is going extremely well
  - Toronto Blue Jays season opening night game vs. the NY Yankees March 31 with a sell-out crowd of 50,119 – Toronto's largest opening day gathering since 1995.
  - The Avril Lavigne concert April 9 drew an audience of 18,000 people
  - The 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Toronto Wine Show (April 11-13) had one of its biggest turnouts ever.

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- The National Home Show took place April 4-13 at the Canadian National Exhibition, with approximately 175,000 in attendance.
- Toronto Maple Leafs continue to host the Flyers in the Stanley Cup playoffs at the Air Canada Centre, to sold out crowds.

## **Questions & Answers – SARS**

### **Q. Is it safe to visit tourist attractions or participate in public events (e.g. baseball games) during the SARS emergency in Ontario?**

A. Public health officials have advised that that Toronto is a safe place to work and play. SARS is not widespread in the community, and health officials further advise that the risk to the general population of contracting SARS is very low. The cases of SARS that exist in Ontario can all be traced back to exposures at Scarborough Hospital, Grace Division or York Central Hospital, or exposure through travel.

### **Q. Are tourism industry workers who provide service to members of the traveling public at risk of contracting or transmitting the disease?**

A. SARS is not widespread in the community. The risk to the general population is very very low. Tourism industry workers are encouraged to observe normal good health practices, such as frequent hand washing.

### **Q. Should I proceed with my travel plans to Toronto?**

A. Yes. "Ontario remains a healthy and safe travel destination. The risk of contracting SARS among the general population remains extremely low. Tourists and business should continue to come to Ontario. It is safe," according to Dr. James Young, Ontario's Commissioner of Public Security.

### **Q. What do the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) say about travel to Canada?**

A. Neither the [CDC](#) nor the [WHO](#) has issued travel advisories for travel to Canada. In other words, these organizations do not advise *against* travel to Canada.

### **Q. Where can I go for more information?**

A. The following sites provide detailed information regarding SARS.

[Toronto Public Health](#)

[Health Canada](#)

[Ontario Ministry of Health](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia](#)

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