

# TORONTO

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

**April 17, 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 17**. 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."
- 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.
- Jodi Moore, Groups Sale Specialist for Performance Tours of Minnesota stated after a recent visit to Toronto, "All fear diminished upon the group's arrival in Toronto. Nothing seemed at all out of the ordinary, and any previous worries of SARS were easily forgotten. There were no people to be seen wearing surgical masks...contrary to all the news reports."
- Meeting for the first time in Canada, 1,900 Buddhist followers from Asia, Australia, Europe, South America and the United States are currently attending the Teachings for World Peace Festival in Toronto. This weeklong event is being held at the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel, until April 22.
- Important organizations continue to select Toronto as a destination for their conventions and meetings. [Conference Direct](#) one of North America's largest third party meeting planning companies recently chose Toronto as its location for its 2004 Annual General Meeting.
- In [The Chicago Daily Herald](#) assures tourists that it is safe to travel to Toronto in an April 14<sup>th</sup> article.
- In an informal survey conducted by [Business Traveler](#) stated that 74% people survey said "they have not canceled travel plans because of SARS" and 79% percent said, "they have not rerouted flights to avoid high-risk areas."

### **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?**

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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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