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COMMUNIQUE #7

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) UPDATE

April 23, 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 23**. Sources include: [Toronto Public Health](#), [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) and [Health Canada](#). For all SARS updates, please visit [Tourism Toronto](#).

NEW DEVELOPMENTS:

- Leaders from Toronto's tourism industry announced today the formation of the [Toronto Tourism Industry Community Coalition](#), to address the tourism business impacts of SARS and to develop a short-to medium-term industry response campaign. The action group, chaired by Tourism Toronto, is comprised of senior leaders from industry, labour and the business community through the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Local 75 of the Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre, the Toronto Board of Trade, the City of Toronto, the Government of Ontario – Ministry of Recreation and Tourism and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership.

FACTS:

- Dr. Sheela Basrur, Toronto's [Chief Medical Officer of Health](#) responded to the [WHO advisory](#) at a press conference on April 23 stating, "In my opinion, the facts of the matter do not warrant that, at this time. To categorize us close to Beijing or other parts of China is a gross exaggeration of the facts." Basrur continues to advise 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.
- In response to the WHO advisory- Health Canada disagrees with the WHO's position and believe that it is safe to travel in Toronto. They challenge the WHO's assertion that Toronto is an unsafe place to visit, and will be making a formal protest through a letter to be sent today. The Centers for Disease Control in the US were invited to do an audit in Toronto, yesterday. Health Canada states that "CDC's assessment of the situation in Canada is accurate. It states that: "Currently, all cases in Toronto are linked to Toronto's original index case and spread has been through person-to-person contact. SARS transmission in Toronto has been limited to a small number of hospitals, households, and specific community settings."
- Large numbers of high-profile public events and conferences continue to take place throughout the City of Toronto: the US National Association of School Psychologists and the Industrial Accident Prevention Association both held their conferences as scheduled in April with tremendous success; and, the 20th year of the Toronto Wine & Cheese Show had one of its biggest turn-outs ever.
- Dr. Colin D'Cunha, 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.

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- Ontario's Ministry of Health has advised that **129** patients receiving treatment for SARS have been discharged from the hospital.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has issued an interim travel alert, advising those traveling to Toronto to avoid settings such as health care facilities caring for SARS patients. Please note that this is distinct from a travel advisory. The CDC states in its alert: "SARS transmission in Toronto has been limited to a small number of hospitals, households, and specific community settings. In response, CDC recommends that U.S. travelers to Toronto observe precautions to safeguard their health, see: [CDC- Travel Advice](#). This includes avoidance of settings where SARS is most likely to be transmitted, such as health care facilities caring for SARS patients. "
- The Independent Educational Consultants Association from Virginia USA have confirmed that their Spring meeting will go ahead as planned. There will be 600 delegates in Toronto May 6-9, and the meeting will be at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel.
- The American Library Association (ALA) continues with its plan to hold its 2003 Annual Conference in Toronto, Canada. This long-anticipated joint conference of ALA and the Canadian Library Association (CLA), to be held June 19-25, 2003, will be the world's largest and most comprehensive annual library event and exhibition. Both ALA and CLA are monitoring closely the health situation in Toronto.

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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