

**Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs**

Office of the Minister

77 Grenville Street, 11th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1B3
Tel: 416-326-3074
www.ontario.ca/OMAFRA

**Ministère de l'Agriculture, de
l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales**

Bureau du ministre

77, rue Grenville, 11^e étage
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1B3
Tél. : 416 326-3074
www.ontario.ca/MAAARO



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COVID Alert App

Albert Witteveen
Chair and President
Ontario Hop Growers' Association
albert.witteveen4@gmail.com

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you all for your ongoing efforts during this unprecedented time. Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, our government has worked with all our partners to make the health and well-being of all Ontarians our first priority.

As part of our efforts to achieve this goal, our government released *Protecting Ontarians through Enhanced Case and Contact Management*, a comprehensive strategy to quickly test, trace and isolate cases of COVID-19. To further support these efforts, we have been working in partnership with the federal government on a new, privacy-first, made-in-Ontario exposure notification app: COVID Alert.

Our government is encouraging all Ontarians to download this free, user-friendly app from the Apple and Google Play app stores to their smart phones. Once downloaded, it is completely voluntary to use, and does not collect or share any personal information, such as a user's name, phone number, location, or COVID-19 test status.

COVID Alert uses Bluetooth technology to detect other users nearby and never collects health information, location or identity. If a user later tests positive, they can notify other app users who have been near them recently.

The app will help easily notify more Ontarians about potential exposure, provides them with the most updated key public health information and supports our common goal to stop the spread of the virus.

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Good things grow in Ontario
À bonne terre, bons produits

Ministry Headquarters: 1 Stone Road West, Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2
Bureau principal du ministère: 1 Stone Road West, Guelph (Ontario) N1G 4Y2

Along with [physical distancing](#), frequent hand washing, [wearing a mask](#) and [other important public health advice](#), knowing what to do if you have been exposed to COVID-19 is another key way to protect ourselves, our families and our communities from this virus.

COVID Alert is a key tool to protect each other as we cautiously move forward. Please find in the attachment a poster and fact sheet that can be used to help encourage more Ontarians to download and use the COVID Alert app.

We are pleased that businesses across Ontario, including farms, have implemented protocols based on local public health guidance to reduce the risks of COVID-19 transmission. But we recognize that more needs to be done to assist farms.

That's why Ontario has launched an online toolkit for farmers so that they better understand the supports that are available to them and their workers: <http://www.Ontario.ca/covidfarmertoolkit>. This toolkit includes information for farmers and farm workers around prevention, accommodations, wages, health and wellness assessments and social supports.

Recently, OMAFRA has also introduced several other programs that are new or have seen changes to be more responsive to the needs of Ontario producers.

Expansion of the Risk Management Program

On July 16, 2020, the government announced the expansion of the Risk Management Program a year earlier than planned by \$50 million for a total of \$150 million annually.

This funding supports farmers with unforeseen challenges such as fluctuating market prices, extreme weather events like flooding or drought, and disease.

Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program

We encourage agri-food businesses to access the \$15 million under the Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program to help increase health and safety measures to better protect their workers.

For more information please visit:
www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/agrifoodprogram.htm.

Health Guidelines

The Ontario Government has provided resources, best practices and information to help keep your workers safe and healthy and your business in operation during COVID-19. You can find more information on those guidelines for the agriculture sector on the [Agriculture health and safety during COVID-19 website](#).

Employers can work with their local Public Health Units to address the needs of their workers and to better understand how their facilities can be equipped to manage the spread of COVID-19.

Testing

Our government is making COVID-19 testing widely available as a tool to help provide confidence and identify infection even when people are asymptomatic. By identifying illness early, we can limit the spread among workers ensuring better health and safety for employees and helping farms manage the impact of illnesses.

That's why our government is committed to testing everybody, even those who have no symptoms. Further information can be found on the [Ontario Ministry of Health COVID-19 website](#).

I strongly encourage all farm operators that have employees to take steps to make testing available to your workers and encourage them to get tested regularly. In order to protect your employees and your farm operation if you have new people coming onto your farm, including new employees and contract workers, I encourage you to ask them whether they have had a recent negative test.

Asymptomatic testing does not replace public health protocols around maintaining physical distancing when feasible, diligent handwashing, and self-isolation requirements. But it can be a valuable tool to help contain infection, prevent outbreaks of COVID-19 and increase peace of mind that the enhanced protocols you have put in place are working.

I encourage you to work with your local Public Health Unit or contact OMAFRA if you have questions around proactive testing.

Sector-Specific Health and Safety Guidance

Everyone has a duty to protect the health and safety of workers in Ontario. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for businesses and individuals around the world, including farms and farm workers.

More than 170 workplace health and safety resources, including guidelines and tip sheets are available at [Ontario.ca/covidsafety](https://www.ontario.ca/covidsafety). They include resources translated into French and Spanish specifically for the agricultural sector.

As more information becomes available, I will continue to keep you updated on these and further initiatives. We need to work together to keep our farms safe.

Only together can we keep one another safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernie Hardeman', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Ernie Hardeman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Attachments

COVID Alert

Download the app to protect yourself and your community.

The **COVID Alert app** lets you know if you may have been exposed to the virus. You can then get tested and keep you and your community safe. The app is voluntary: The more people who choose to use it, the more effective we will be at stopping the spread of COVID-19.



COVID Alert is:

- **Free.** Download it in Apple and Google app stores.
- **Easy to use.** Install it and stay safe on your daily journey.
- **Safe and private.** It never collects your health information, location, or identity.



Protect yourself. Protect others.
Download Canada's COVID Alert app.
Available in the Apple or Google app stores.



For more information, visit ontario.ca/covidalert

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Ontario 

Download the COVID Alert App to Protect Yourself and Your Community

COVID Alert, Canada's official COVID-19 exposure notification app, is now available for download in Ontario from the Apple and Google Play app stores.

The new made-in-Ontario app is free, easy and safe to use. It lets you know if you may have been exposed to the virus. You can then get tested and keep you and your community safe. The more people who have the app, the more effective we will be at stopping the spread of the COVID-19 as the province carefully reopens.

COVID Alert uses Bluetooth technology to detect other users nearby and never collects your health information, location or identity.

How the app works:

- Once you download the app, it runs in the background of your phone.
- The app will not know where or when you encounter other users, your location, name, address, contacts or health information.
- If you receive a message from COVID Alert that you may have been exposed to the virus, follow the public health advice given on the app and get tested.
- To notify other people if you've tested positive for COVID-19, enter the one-time key from Ontario's test results website ([Ontario.ca/covidresults](https://ontario.ca/covidresults)) into the app. This will send a message to other app users who have been within 2 metres of you for at least 15 minutes within the past 14 days.

COVID Alert keeps you informed, allows you to act quickly and helps stop the spread of the virus. It is another key tool in the fight against COVID-19.

To stay safe, everyone should continue to follow public health guidelines including physical distancing with people not in their social circle, wearing a face covering if physical distancing is a challenge, washing hands thoroughly and frequently, and if anyone thinks they have COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19, getting tested.

Download this made-in-Ontario app for free on your mobile phone from the Apple or Google Play app stores and help stop the spread.

For more information, visit [Ontario.ca/covidalert](https://ontario.ca/covidalert).