With long waiting times for COVID-19 tests and a backlog at laboratories processing tests, the Ontario government has shifted the focus of its COVID-19 testing approach away from asymptomatic people.

Effective immediately, only Ontario residents who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 or who are at high risk to get the disease should be tested, according to changes to the Ontario government's COVID-19 testing guidelines announced on Thursday (September 24).

"As the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed, the province must also adapt its approach to testing," states Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Ontario's associate chief medical officer of health. "With the upcoming flu and cold season approaching, we need to ensure Ontario's publicly funded testing resources are available for those who need them the most, such as school children and others with symptoms of COVID-19."

"That's why, in consultation with health experts and Ontario's Testing Strategy Expert Panel, Dr. David Williams and I have recommended Ontario update testing guidelines to prioritize those who are at the greatest risk, while shifting away from untargeted asymptomatic testing," Yaffe added.

The Ontario government now says you should only seek COVID-19 testing at any of Ontario's 150 assessment centres if:

- you are showing COVID-19 symptoms
- you have been exposed to a confirmed case of the virus, as informed by your public health unit or exposure notification through the COVID Alert app
- you are a resident or a worker a setting that has had a COVID-19 outbreak, as identified and informed by your local public health unit
- you are eligible for testing as part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

For residents of the greater Kawarthas region, these means you should not be seeking testing at any of the region's assessment centres unless you meet one or more of the above criteria. These include the assessment centres at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre and Eastgate Memorial Park in Peterborough, at Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay, at Northumberland Hills Hospital in Cobourg, at the Trent Hills COVID19 Assessment Centre in Campbellford, at Haliburton Highlands Health Services in Haliburton, and at Quinte Healthcare Corporation in Bancroft.

Ontarians who are not showing symptoms can still seek tests at selected pharmacies in Toronto, North York, Markham, East York, Scarborough, Weston, Etobicoke, Mississauga, Brampton, Ottawa, Kanata, Nepean, and Huntsville. There are no pharmacies offering