



NEWS

Kawartha residents will likely have to wait until end of year for rapid COVID-19 test

New COVID-19 rapid tests have already been delivered to two Ontario hospitals with 20 more preparing to launch in the coming weeks

By Catherine Whitnall Kawartha Lakes This Week

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Local health groups are applauding the arrival of a “game-changer” in the fight against COVID-19.

On Tuesday, Nov. 24, the provincial government deployed new COVID-19 rapid tests to provide faster results in regions of high transmission and rural and remote areas. The tests will be used to screen staff in long-term-care homes and select workplaces

and help to quickly identify and manage outbreaks to stop the spread of COVID-19.

“We know it is stressful for people waiting on a test result, so anything that can be done to speed up the process is a benefit for those who have been tested, and for the rest of the community in helping to prevent the spread of the virus,” said Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit medical officer of health Dr. Lynn Noseworthy.

“While we understand the rapid tests are not yet being deployed in the HKPR area, we look forward to hearing more from the province about the tests and how they would be best utilized in our health unit area.”

Ontario has received approximately 98,000 ID NOW tests that are initially being used in hospitals and assessment centres in rural and remote communities, as well as to test people as part of early outbreak investigations in hot spot regions where there are high concentrations of COVID-19 cases. Two hospitals are using ID NOW, with 20 additional hospitals preparing to launch rapid testing. The program will expand further in December.

“For the time being, rapid testing is meant to be used in areas of high transmission; remote, rural, isolated and Indigenous communities; or to support outbreak management as directed by the local public health unit. RMH will be receiving rapid tests in the near future, which we would use to support local outbreak management or as directed by our public health unit,” stated Ross Memorial Hospital president and CEO Kelly Isfan, adding since the rapid test provides only a preliminary result, that is less accurate than lab-based testing, patients would receive two swabs so that their initial result can be confirmed in a lab setting.

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The Lindsay hospital will continue to use lab-based testing for COVID-19 results, which are usually available within 48 hours.

The province also received 1.2 million Abbott Panbio rapid antigen tests, and 1.5

million more are expected by the end of the year, to support a screening program for long-term-care homes and other workplaces.

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