

April 30, 2020 Seniors Tele Town Hall – Transcript

Alain Normand:

Good morning everybody and welcome to our Tele Town Hall for seniors. My name is Alain Normand. I'm the Manager of the Brampton Emergency Management office and I will be your moderator this morning. This morning we're pleased to have with us a panel of speakers and I'd like to welcome first we have the mayor Patrick Brown on the line, we have Councillors Pat Fortini and Gurpreet Dhillon are going to be here as they are the co-chairs of the Senior Support Task Force.

Alain Normand:

We have MPP Amarjot Sandhu who's representing Brampton West, is joining us. And we also have Dr. Lawrence Loh, our Medical Officer of Health for Peel Public Health. We have Kiki Ferrari from William Osler who is the Executive VP of Clinical Operations and we have Dr. Saha as well from William Osler who is the Medical Director for Seniors Health.

Alain Normand:

And we are expecting a few more people that might join us on the line. We have Mary Boushel from Region of Peel Health Services and we have from United Way, Maya, Senior Manager of Community Services. We also have, if you have questions on the enforcement and bylaw with us, we have Paul Morrison who is the Director and John Pierre Maurice who is the Manager of Enforcement.

Alain Normand:

So thank you for our panel for joining us this morning. We're very happy to have this going on. Now let me first start by saying that if you have questions to the general public calling in, please press star three on your phone now. So if you have questions, you want to ask a question to any of our panel members, please press star three on your phone. Thank you. So first I'll ask some of our speakers to give a bit of an update and we will go then to questions. So first I'm going to invite our Mayor, Mr. Patrick Brown to give us an update at this point. Thank you Mr. Mayor Brown.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

Well thank you Alain, and thank you to all the residents who have joined our Seniors Town Hall. Last time we had this call, we had an incredible 1000 plus seniors on the call and the focus of this Tele Town Hall for Seniors is to directly focus on seniors issues with some of the individuals who have the highest level of knowledge on how to keep you safe and grateful that Dr. Lawrence Loh is once again lending us his time. Kiki from Osler Health, these healthcare professionals have so much weight on their backs right now keeping Peel Region safe and the fact that they take time to spend an hour with us speaks volumes to how committed they are to this task.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

I want to say first of all that the physical distancing, I know it's hard but it is working. We are making a difference. You're seeing community spread slow although we still have significant challenges within the long-term care setting. And I know this this physical distancing isn't easy. I think of my own parents, they're both over the age of 70 and both like to be quite active and for them the isolation is challenging.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

But the reality is our seniors are particularly vulnerable and it's why these public health measures are so critical. As I told my own father that it's more important that he's able to go to his grandson's graduation or wedding one day, many years in the future then it is for him to go to his office right now, and that we need to put everyone's health first. And in time we are going to get through this.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

And so thank you to Brampton seniors who have been so cooperative and I can tell you by and large, 99% of the city is stepping up and listening to public health. There's been a few bad apples and sure they've been fined. In the last week we had to issue another 30 fines. But of a city of 700,000 people that we're talking about 30 bad apples, it shows by and large people are sticking together, understanding that we have to listen to public health to get through to this.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

So this Town Hall is an opportunity for you to tell us what can we do to make this period easier. I had some seniors speak to us before about community gardens. And we've launched a community garden program now that we're going to... In fact 10,000 people sign up for backyard gardens, where our community gardens are now going to be able to operate again with specific provisions for seniors. And so the ideas we get on Town Halls like this are so valuable because we want to hear from you on how we can serve you better.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

The reality is at the City of Brampton, we work for you. You are the residents of this city. I'm grateful that Councillor Fortini and Dhillon have been working so hard on our Seniors Task Force. You would note that we have a service, if you call 311 we can have a volunteer come and get your medications and get your groceries. We don't want you to be in harm's way. We don't want you to be at risk in the grocery store and so the services available to you and thank you to Councillor Fortini and Gurpreet Dhillon's offices which have both been working hard on this task.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

So I'm looking forward to the questions. I'm going to be on the call until 10:30, at which case I have to join a call for the Peel Police, but I'll be listening to all the comments and I'll be getting an update afterwards from the Councillors. I'm actually doing this call today from home. Modern technology means we can do it from home.

Mayor Patrick Brown:

Councillor Dhillon and Fortini are at our emergency operations center. So if you hear noise in the background is because I have my nine month year old literally running around me as I do this call. That's the beauty of fatherhood. You get to juggle different tasks at the same time. So thank you everyone for being on the call and look forward to the questions.

Alain Normand:

Thank you Mayor Brown. Next we'll go to Councillor Fortini, ask him to give us a bit of an update.

Councillor Pat Fortini:

Good morning everyone and thank you for everyone for joining and thank you to our Mayor Patrick Brown. So we're going to try to get out as many questions as we can in this morning. So on the Senior Task Force, we're getting to myself and Councillor Dhillon as Co-chairs, we're going to explain many things, how we can make it a lot easier on the programs for groceries and medical pickup and if they have any for exercise program, we're doing an average about 75 requests a week for the senior support.

Councillor Pat Fortini:

Some of the seniors are paying by credit card online and we have all these volunteers, which we should thank a lot. Without them and the staff, this wouldn't be possible for helping out. And if some seniors don't have credit cards or can't pay, we actually, if you call us we'll pay and we'll be sending a bill out and then within 30 days and they could just send the check or pay in cash later to date to help out to make it a lot easier.

Councillor Pat Fortini:

This is all, like the Mayor said is trying to keep the seniors safe, keep them at home. And myself, Councillor Dhillon, we got some staff and the volunteers and the Mayor, once you call 311 we could try to do anything we can to help you to make your life a little bit easier. Thank you.

Alain Normand:

All right, thank you Councillor Fortini and next we'll have Councillor Dhillon give us a few words as well.

Councillor Dhillon:

Absolutely Alain, thank you so much and I want to thank everybody for tuning in from home. The primary goal of the Seniors Task Force is that we want seniors stay at home, healthy and safe, but we also recognize that your overall social and mental wellbeing is important. So if you're looking for simple ways to stay fit and engaged, check out the Rec at Home videos on the city website, the short online recreational classes that range in intensity and feature a variety of workouts for every preference. And new routines are added regularly and stored in an online gallery for easy access to fitness when it suits your schedule.

Councillor Dhillon:

So my father's at home, he's 70 years old, he's a senior and usually he's really active, but we've had him going on the website to use these and he's really found them very helpful. The city also held it's first senior's cafe for a call in chat. So this is a free telephone program offered through the City of Brampton. It's a great opportunity to connect and socialize with others from the comfort of your very own home. Calling time slot offerings include general conversations, themed conversations and games and activities. The language preferences will also be accommodated where possible.

Councillor Dhillon:

And just want to make a note that all calls are moderated by the City of Brampton staff member. And if you're interested, definitely call us at 311 to get more information on this program. Before I conclude, I just want to add that we have many seniors with accessibility requirements and we're committed to ensuring that our services are inclusive for all of us in the community. And so our information and resources are available in alternate formats as well. So our social support task force is also able to support if our residents require any assistance.

Councillor Dhillon:

And once again, I just want to thank you guys all for tuning in today. I've been, and I know Councillor Fortini and our Mayor Patrick Brown have been big in supporting our seniors whether it's been free seniors bus passes or any other opportunities that we can get to serve those who came for us and really built our city. So I want to say thank you for all that you've done and all your strength and courage during this whole process. Once again, thanks to everybody.

Alain Normand:

Thank you Councillor Dhillon, appreciate your comments. Before we move on to our next speaker just want to remind you that if you have a question, you want to ask a question, please press star three on your phone. Thank you.

Alain Normand:

Next we'll go to the province of Ontario and we have our MPP Armarjot Sandhu is there and I'm going to invite him to provide some remarks. And he may not be able to stay on the call today, but his office can arrange to help with some of the questions afterwards. MPP Sandhu, please go ahead.

MPP Sandhu:

Thank you so much. How much time I have?

Councillor Dhillon:

All the time you need.

Alain Normand:

Yeah, go ahead.

MPP Sandhu:

Thank you so much. So thank you. First of all, thank you Mayor Brown and council members and city staff for organizing this important Tele Town Hall on supporting seniors in response to the COVID-19. Let me assure you that our government is using every tool and resource at its disposal to fortify the [inaudible 00:11:19] of protection around our seniors and our most vulnerable to slow the spread of COVID-19.

MPP Sandhu:

So let me tell you that ever since the action plan was announced by the government, the government has worked quickly to provide focus on the ground support to long-term care homes by ramping up testing, supplying teams from hospitals, public health and home care to support infection control and prevention, putting long-term care homes in need of urgent support under the [inaudible 00:11:52] of hospitals where possible. And growing our [inaudible 00:11:55] healthcare workforce. It's a matter of pride that since the beginning of this crisis there has been a tremendous partnership between all three levels of government.

MPP Sandhu:

The federal government has offered resources for support and personnel from Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Canadian armed forces. This is also to let you know that armed

forces were deployed at Holland Christian Homes, Grace Manor in Brampton to provide staffing relief so staff can focus on the care of residents and will help with the coordination and logistics of medical care, infection prevention and control and day to day operations.

MPP Sandhu:

We're also assisting 20 long-term care homes which were previously experiencing outbreaks to become now outbreak free. We're also increasing testing on both symptomatic and asymptomatic staff and residents. To date, approximately 11,600 tests have been completed among residents in long-term care homes. We're also conducting additional testing of asymptomatic [inaudible 00:12:59] and staff outside of the testing guidance at 21 long-term care homes to help understand the spread of the virus.

MPP Sandhu:

We're setting up a 24/7 long-term care COVID-19 response team which has already helped more than 30 homes by putting in place infection control protocols, resolving staffing issues and fulfilling personal protective equipment needs. We're launching 31 infection prevention and control interventions which are currently in progress and with six assessments completed. We're continuing to identify critical 24, 48 and 72 hour health that homes need by matching qualified people and volunteers who can help with duties, including nursing support and cleaning.

MPP Sandhu:

Responding to every escalated request for personal protective equipment from long-term care homes within 24 hours to a four step process in order to ensure an optimized regional distribution and redistribution when supplies are urgently needed. When critical supplies needs are actually escalated for provincial action, a daily distribution of supply from provincial warehouse to original sites are insured following by daily monitoring, [inaudible 00:14:12] reporting against performance.

MPP Sandhu:

[inaudible 00:14:14] hundred percent of critical needs requests being shipped within 24 hours. Providing over 400 job matches for long-term care homes through the province health workforce matching portal with over half of Ontario's long-term care homes now using the portal. In short, our government believes we have a duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves. So that's why we are using every tool in our toolbox.

MPP Sandhu:

It's also important to know that Ontario government is investing 11 million to help deliver meals, medicines and other essentials to those in need. The province is working with Ontario Community Support Association to launch a new Ontario community support program to expand existing meals on wheels services to reach low income seniors and people with disabilities and chronic medical conditions across Ontario.

MPP Sandhu:

Also, we are doubling that guaranteed annual income system gains, payment for 194,000 low income seniors for six months. This would increase next month payment for individuals to 166 per month for individuals and 332 per month for couples. This means, and as I have already said, every option is on the table and we will leave no stone unturned when it comes to protecting over most vulnerable.

MPP Sandhu:

Last but not the least, our frontline heroes are working around the clock and they're supporting our communities and incredible ways. We know together we are stronger and this is the Ontario spirit. Before I close, I would like to say that please don't hesitate to contact me and my office for sharing your issues, suggestions and concerns. This will definitely help us to serve you better. Thank you so much.

Alain Normand:

Thank you very much MPP Armarjot Sandhu. We are now going to ask our Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Lawrence Loh to give us a few words on the situation. Dr. Loh?

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

Thank you so much. Hi. Yes, thank you so much for the opportunity. Thank you Mayor Brown, Councillors Fortini and Dhillon and MPP Sandhu. It's really an opportunity here to provide an update on COVID-19 outbreak to Brampton seniors who I also greet. Certainly, just in terms of the current situation as of yesterday the numbers, there's over 2000 cases and in the region of Peel; 2,403 confirmed cases and 1050 of those are in Brampton. Certainly most of the cases in Peel have been mild, but we do know that the outbreak so far has sadly taken the lives of 99 residents and 133 of our cases have been hospitalized during the course of their illness. And certainly we do recognize that the extreme toll that this has taken and certainly extend our sincere condolences to those who have lost their loved ones.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

I do want to share in terms of the data, we have a data dashboard on our website which is available peelregion.ca/coronavirus and that provides... If you go to Status of COVID-19 which you'll find in the bottom right part of the website, you'll find an interactive website that can not provide insight into cases in Peel. It can be filtered by municipality and it can provide you with a little bit of a better understanding of the COVID picture as it unfolds in Peel.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

I think that the more important thing that I want to talk to you about today besides the numbers however, is really where the challenge is unfolding. We're still seeing in the community transmission, but thanks to the physical distancing efforts that have been made, we are starting to see a slowdown in the number of new cases that are associated with community transmission. As many of you know, certainly from the media attention that has risen, we are really focused at this time on a number of outbreaks in our long-term care retirement home facilities.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

And as of today we have a number of homes, over 16 homes that are currently experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak. It's important for me to state here that a COVID-19 outbreak is considered one case diagnosed in a resident or a staff member and that really just shows how seriously we're taking this issue in order for us to immediately launch further actions and measures to tend to protect the staff and residents of these settings.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

Peel Public Health is working together with the Ministry of Health as well as the Ontario Health central region, local area hospitals, healthcare partners, our paramedics and also the administrators of long-

term care retirement homes to coordinate a broad response on a number of fronts. Certainly in terms of things like staffing, personal protective equipment an enhanced infection prevention and control measures and also outbreak control and broad testing.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

Peel Public Health has been leading at least the aspect around outbreak control and the direction on testing. And I can tell you that most of the long-term care homes that have been identified as priority or urgent homes for testing have been completed, and those with emerging challenges continue to be tested and will be completed by the end of the weekend. So that work continues. But certainly the focus of late has been the growing situation in our long-term care facilities and trying to stabilize the picture there. So that really speaks to the questions that a lot of people have around when do we return to sort of the way things used to be.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

Certainly, I think we're still in a bit of an early phase of the pandemic in our community and it's a bit too soon to predict with any certainty exactly when that will be. However, as I mentioned we are seeing some positive slowing of new cases in the community. What we want to see is we also want to make sure that there is a slowing and a stabilization of the picture in our hospitals and in our ICUs. Certainly in the tragic past things that are occurring and especially in our long-term care and Congress settings before we start to think about how we gradually relieve some of the restrictions that have been put in place.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

And I do want to say certainly speaking to a group of seniors that we recognize that this has had a disproportionate impact on your way of life. Certainly the recommendations to stay home as much as possible, and as much as possible rely on other people to complete essential needs otherwise failing which to try to make use of senior hours, et cetera. This has all been advice that has been given to protect you by reducing your interactions with members of the public.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

Really this disease spreads from person to person and we do know that people who are over the age of 65 in Ontario, at least based on Public Health Ontario data, and also people with underlying medical conditions are at greatest risk of severe outcomes if they are to contract the disease. And so that is why the recommendations have been there. That said, I know it hasn't been easy, certainly being apart from those that we love and family and friends.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

So I certainly encourage you to try your best to stay connected as you can virtually, by phone or by video chat. Certainly focusing on eating well. You can also exercise certainly on your own or with someone else in your immediate household. But that can mean going for a walk or going outside and that can actually be quite helpful for your wellbeing. Just making sure that you're of course staying away from other people while you are out and possibly trying to go earlier in the day or later in the day where there may be less people out and about.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

But in general, I know it certainly has been trying times for our seniors, but I want you to know that the sacrifices that have been made as the steps that you've all taken to protect yourself and everyone else in the community has really turned the course of the pandemic here in Peel. And so we will continue to start to work on our continued priority in our long-term care and senior settings and to try to bring that picture under control.

Dr. Lawrence Loh:

But in the meantime I ask you folks to do your part to continue staying home as much as you can, physically distancing. And of course staying in touch with your loved ones so that we can really bring this to a more stable picture in the weeks to come. So thank you again for all that you folks are doing and I certainly appreciate it. So I'll pass it back to the moderator.

Alain Normand:

Thank you Dr. Loh, appreciate your comments.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:23:04]

Alain Normand:

Thank you, Dr. Loh. Appreciate your comment. One of the things, also, we know is that our healthcare workers have been doing an amazing job in this situation, very challenging. So next, I'm going to ask Kiki Ferrari, VP from William Osler, to give us a little bit about how the hospital is responding to the crisis. Kiki, are you on the line?

Kiki Ferrari:

Yes, I am. Can you hear me?

Alain Normand:

Yes. Please go ahead.

Kiki Ferrari:

Okay, great. Thank you, [Alain 00:23:32], and thank you very much to Mayor Patrick Brown and the City of Brampton for arranging this call, also to Councillor Pat Fortini and Regional Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon, along with MPP Amarjot Sandhu and Laurence, who we speak almost daily with. So first of all, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. I am the Executive Vice President of Clinical Operations at Osler. And certainly, this is a challenging time for all of us, including at Osler. At the hospital, we're working diligently to ensure we support and protect our patients, as well as our staff, physicians, and volunteers, while also ensuring we continue to have capacity to care for patients experiencing complications from COVID-19.

Kiki Ferrari:

Over the past number of weeks, Osler made a number of changes to our services, including scaling down non-urgent surgeries and clinical activities, according to directions issued by the Ontario Government. We know our community is hoping for a return to normal operations soon and we are, too. We're continuing to monitor this situation closely and, with the government's announcement earlier this week, Osler is beginning to work on initial plans to resume both non-urgent and scheduled surgery, in line with

the Ministry of Health guidance and direction. In addition, emergency surgeries and urgent procedures have been continuing over the past number of weeks. So we haven't stopped entirely. Our inpatient service for seniors continue to operate. To maintain our outpatient services for seniors as much as possible, we have moved to virtual platforms like teleconferencing and videoconferencing.

Kiki Ferrari:

As you may know, Osler made the decision to temporarily close Peel Memorial's Urgent Care Center, effective last Saturday. We saw this as a priority opportunity to reassign our highly-skilled doctors and nurses working there who are emergency-department trained to other areas of the hospital where they are needed most, like our emergency department and critical care areas. Those who might normally access the UCC will find safe, timely care in our emergency departments at Brampton Civic Hospital or Etobicoke General Hospital during this temporary closure. If you are experiencing serious health symptoms, we want you to come to the emergency department. And I underline in bold that. Please, do not hesitate. We will take care of you and continue to keep you safe and protected.

Kiki Ferrari:

Due to the serious nature of COVID, Osler, along with other hospitals across Ontario, took the difficult step of implementing a no-visitor policy. We recognize this is a challenging time for so many, especially those with loved ones in the hospital. And we carefully considered how to best ensure everyone who enters our doors remain safe. There are some compassionate exceptions to this policy, including visitors for patients who are at end of life. We do have virtual visitation in place, along with free wifi, an iPad loaner program to make sure patients and families are staying connected. It's so wonderful that we have this technology at least, but we know that this is very difficult for everyone involved.

Kiki Ferrari:

As Laurence mentioned, there's a number of long-term care homes who have been in very much need of immediate support. Osler has been responding and sending teams to provide a number of services, including the transfer of some COVID-19 patients from these homes into the hospital. We've helped them in infection control measures. We've swapped patients and staff to expedite testing and we've also created a new virtual physician consultation, rather, to help the long-term care homes who need some medical support without the patients having to be transferred anywhere.

Kiki Ferrari:

Osler's nurse-led outreach team program and part of our team here today is not only Dr. Sudip Saha, but also Sheelagh Willett, who is the lead for our nurse-led outreach team program. She is one of our nurse practitioners and her and the team have been doing an amazing job to help support these long-term care facilities, as well, and help avoid [EB 00:28:33] visits and admissions where possible. If they are extremely ill and need to come to hospital, of course, we are ready and prepared to take care of them. Many seniors in the community still require routine physician care outside of COVID-19. We suggest that you continue to contact your family doctor's office. They may be able to connect with you virtually or in person. They usually screen you in advance, but they should be your first line of contact. If you need connection with a geriatrician, Dr. Sudip Saha will talk a little bit about that shortly.

Kiki Ferrari:

Osler is so incredibly grateful for the tremendous outpouring of community support we have received in recent days and weeks through donations, parades, kind words, and messages. It fills our hearts to see

how the community comes together in times of need. I can tell you very personally that we feel the community right behind us. Working in the COVID environment in a hospital setting is challenging. It's a day-in and day-out very hard work for our frontline staff. And as you can imagine, they're working long, tough hours. Knowing that our community is behind us in any way, but the ways you have come forward is just so incredible. I can't thank you enough from the bottom of my heart for all your support.

Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon:

Thank you, [inaudible 00:30:21].

Kiki Ferrari:

I know many ...

Gurpreet Dhillon:

Thank you, [inaudible 00:30:24].

Kiki Ferrari:

Okay, you go ahead. I wanted to turn it over to Dr. Saha.

Gurpreet Dhillon:

Right. So just keeping time in mind, we're going to get to the questions soon, so I'm just going to ...

Kiki Ferrari:

Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon:

Yeah. I'm just going to pass it over to [Alain 00:30:39] really quick. We really appreciate your words. Very, very informative. So [Alain 00:30:43], can you just take over?

Alain Normand:

Yeah. We want to move on because we've got a lot of questions and we really do ... The majority of what we're trying to do here is to answer people's questions, so we want to get on to that. So we're going to move on to the question period there. Maybe we'll come back. We have Mary Boushel from the Region of Peel, as well, but maybe we'll come back to you, Mary, a little later on or you'll get a chance to ... one of the questions, we'll answer that, as well.

Alain Normand:

So we'll go to our first question. And the first question we wanted to have David. David, are you on the line?

David:

Yeah. I'm online.

Alain Normand:

Please, go ahead and ask your question.

David:

Good morning, Mayor Patrick Brown, the [inaudible 00:31:26], Gurpreet Dhillon, and all others who are online. David [inaudible 00:31:32]. First of all, I'd like to thank you all for the wonderful service you are doing for the welfare of Brampton people, especially the seniors, during this pandemic COVID-19. Today, the topic I want to talk about is a backyard garden and the program the city has taken up. Thank you all for that, but I'd like to say a few things. Especially our seniors, we are not in a position to get together at [inaudible 00:31:59] these days as such. We keep ourselves occupied through a radio program, which they are giving free of charge and even Councillor Pat Fortini joined us one day. And they keep our seniors occupied like that. And in addition, our seniors have contributed a contribution and we were able to donate to a hospital recently.

David:

So now I come to the point of the backyard gardening because this gardening is very, very useful, especially for seniors like us because it will keep them occupied and on self-isolation and will give good [inaudible 00:32:34], also. So my wife [inaudible 00:32:38] to graduate. And every year, gardening is our hobby and we grow a lot of vegetables in our backyard and it's 100% organic and fresh. You'd be surprised, even my wife is preparing [inaudible 00:32:51] today with the vegetables, which we grew last year and we preserved it in the freezer. So now, my point is this. Gardening is not an easy thing. So really, we have to do it very, very carefully by making the [inaudible 00:33:07]. So normally, planting a plant, especially around the period of Victoria Day, which is falling on May 20th. [crosstalk 00:33:19]

Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon:

David, what's your question?

David:

May 21st, Victoria Day, and most of the planting we do during that period.

Alain Normand:

So what's your question, David? David, what's your question?

Mayor Patrick Brown:

It's Patrick here. It's Mayor Brown. I wanted you to know that we're doing the deliveries now. Councillor Doug Williams has been the one spearheading this with Rob Gasper from the city. And so not only ... And then there's another question on the list from Evelyn. Not only are we going to be delivering soil and seeds ... For those that can pick them up, that's great, but if you can't pick them up, we will deliver them to your house. Just contact 311, ask for the backyard dirt garden program or speak to Doug or Rob and we will make sure that you don't waste any time. We know right now is when you need to be doing the gardening. And I would note, on Monday, we're going to have a special town hall with Frankie Flowers, who's that famous gardener from City TV. He's going to be doing a session to teach Brampton residents who are first-time gardeners how to do it. I know you're not a first-time gardener, but we're really trying to make this as easy as possible for everyone.

Gurpreet Dhillon:

Yeah. Thank you, Mayor. And also, David, we've got to remember we've got other questions. We've got over 11 thousand people asking for this garden program, so it's going to be a real challenge with the volunteers to deliver everything as fast as we can.

Alain Normand:

They've started delivering the soil. They're doing approximately 200 addresses a day, but with 11 thousand people, you can imagine it's going to take a little while before we get to everybody. So we're working on it, definitely. It's coming, so please be patient with us. Next, we'll move on. We'll go to the next question. We have Mr. Patterson. Are you on the line, Mr. Patterson?

Mr. Patterson:

Oh, yes.

Alain Normand:

Please, go ahead with your question.

Mr. Patterson:

Yeah. My question is that everybody's talking about this and that and everything is good, but my question is, what happened to the [inaudible 00:35:23] staying at home, stay home? And then health cards expired from January, February, and you can go inside to get the [inaudible 00:35:37]. I called them and asked them about it. They said that you would have to come in person because they have to take the [inaudible 00:35:43] photograph over.

Alain Normand:

So thank you for your question. Maybe we'll ask MPP Sandhu about this question. What do people do about getting health card renewals or other provincial cards? What are the services right now that they can do the province?

Amarjot Sandhu:

Oh, yes. Absolutely. Thank you for the question and, as you all know, that government has given relief during this pandemic that, if your health card is expired, you don't need to renew your health card for now. You can still access the health services. So if you have any problem, you need to go to the hospital, even if your health card is expired, don't worry about that. So when everything is back to the normal, you can go to the Service Ontario and renew your health card. And same thing with the driver's license and car stickers, as well. If your driver's license is expired, car sticker is expired, you don't need to renew it for now.

Mr. Patterson:

Thank you.

Alain Normand:

All right. Thank you, Mr. Sandhu. Next question we've got here is from Lee. Lee, are you on the line?

Lee:

I'm on the line. Yes.

Alain Normand:

Please, go ahead with your question.

Lee:

Good morning. My question is there's a lot of emphasis put on shopping for people, but what about the people that pays the bill at the bank? There's no banks that's open and I'm not familiar with bank machines, so what do I do?

Alain Normand:

Sorry. I didn't get that. What is your question exactly?

Lee:

The question is, most of the financial institutions are closed. The utility bills still come in. So how do you get to pay them conveniently?

Alain Normand:

Right. So if I may, there's a lot of organizations that have postponed their requirements for payment. What you need to do is really to get in touch with each agency that is usually sending you invoices and make arrangements for either a delay or online payments. There's a lot of things now that can be done online, either through a computer or through the phone. And the banks may not be open physically, the institution, itself, but there's a lot of services that are available online or by phone. So I would suggest that, if you have any need for financial support of any kind, that you go to your bank and you call them or you go online and you check what services they have. There's a lot of things that are still going on. It's not totally closed. So that would be our suggestion for this kind of question. Thank you very much.

Alain Normand:

Next, we'll go to Anabella. So Anabella, are you on the line?

Anabella:

Yes, I am.

Alain Normand:

Please, go ahead with your question.

Anabella:

Okay. Good morning, [inaudible 00:38:47]. I want to thank you for taking my call and I also want to thank for all the hard work everybody's doing, especially the frontline workers. We cannot thank them enough. I'd like to know how many people with COVID-19 are currently in the hospital, how many in ICU, and how many on ventilators? And also, what is the hospital capacity, again, for hospital beds, ICU, and ventilators? Thank you.

Alain Normand:

Okay. Thank you for your question. Maybe we'll ask Kiki, if you can please answer this question for us?

Kiki Ferrari:

Sure. Thank you very much for your question and thank you very much for your kind words for the frontline healthcare workers. I know they appreciate it. Currently, at Brampton Civic Hospital, we have 43 patients in hospital who are positive for COVID. In our ICU, we have 26 patients. Half of those are COVID positive, about half is [inaudible 00:39:50], and they are all on ventilators. It's typical for these patients to stay a little bit longer than our typical ICU patient. We have capacity to put in more critical care patients if necessary. We also have capacity for ventilators. At the time of the initial pandemic, they released what was the ventilator stockpile that the province was storing. We have received those. We also ordered some further ventilators for the hospital and that's made possible from your generous donations to our foundation. So thank you for that.

Kiki Ferrari:

We also have capacity for medicine patients and other patients that come into the hospital and that's because we scaled down surgeries. And so people who would normally be in bed post surgery, because those elective procedures have been canceled and we have redeployed staff from those areas, we now have capacity in hospital. In fact, today, I looked this morning, we had zero patients waiting in the emergency department for a bed, which means that people who are coming in sick are getting up into a bed very quickly. Does that answer your question?

Alain Normand:

I think it's good. Thank you very much. So before we go on to the next question, we do have some polls here. So I'm going to ask Councillor Dhillon to guide you through the first poll. Please, Councillor.

Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon:

Thank you, Alain. So the question is this. And I'm going to give you some options, as well. So one to four. So whichever one you feel you can answer best, press the appropriate number. So the question is, as seniors, how do you get your groceries? Press one if you shop yourself, press two if you ask a family member or a friend to support, press three if you call the city for support, or press four if you contact local organizations, for example, a food bank or places of worship, et cetera.

Alain Normand:

All right. Thank you very much. So we'll give you some time to go through and answer the poll. And meanwhile, we'll go to our next question. And we're going to ask Debbie. Debbie, are you on the line?

Debbie:

Yes, I am.

Alain Normand:

Please, go ahead with your question.

Debbie:

Good morning, all, and want to thank Mayor Brown and his team for the wonderful job they are doing and blessings to all the frontline workers for protecting us all. My question is for all the seniors who don't have a backyard or who live in condos or whatever. Is there some kind of program that can be done online so they can take advantage of keeping themselves with mild exercise, like yoga and tai chi

or something of that sort? For those who don't have any other facility around them, a yard or balcony or whatever, is there something like this can be done?

Debbie:

The other question I have, not a question, but a comment ... and Mayor Brown will receive an email on this ... is safety for seniors. I live on a corner lot and it's my husband and I. We're both 69, 79. And we have a problem with speeding cars around there. Twice in the last couple years, we had cars swerve right into our garden, almost hitting me. Fortunately, I was just minutes away. So this is an issue apart from COVID-19, but I have to bring it up now because it's so unsafe to go in my own yard. So I want to know what can be done. I'm not expecting now, but long term. In the short term, I should say, what can be done for something like this? Thank you.

Alain Normand:

Yeah. Thank you very much for your question, Debbie. I'm going to ask Councillor Fortini to give you some suggestion on some of the things that we've been doing here [crosstalk 00:43:59].

Pat Fortini:

Yeah. Good morning, Debbie. Thank you for calling in. I know a lot of the people in the condos say they can still go out and exercise and go for a walk, but they also have these rec home video programs that they can actually exercise. But if they want to go for a walk and go out on the paths and our parks, so long as they keep the distance, Dr. Lowe said it's safe enough and get all the exercise you need.

Alain Normand:

Right. And maybe online, we have a lot of different programs that you can call ... And if you want more details about the programs, certainly call our 311. We can give you that. But there's things that, as we mentioned, the seniors café where you can call in and chat with different people, get some ideas, activities. So there's a lot of things that are available. If you have internet, please go and check our website, Brampton.ca/COVID. And you can access ... There's tons of resources that are available to keep you busy, keep you occupied, keep you safe and fit at the same time. So please, refer to that or call 311 to get more information about some of the programs. Thank you very much.

Alain Normand:

Yeah. I guess our poll should be closed now, so we should be able to go and maybe, Councillor Dhillon, you want to give us the results of the poll?

Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon:

Yeah. Excuse me. So the poll has been completed and we have 53% of our seniors say they shop themselves. Number two, we have 43%, they ask a family member or a friend to support. And then, at 3%, we have our seniors calling the city for support. And at 1% of our seniors who are on the call right now, say, they contact their local organizations, for example, food bank or place of worship for that support. And so it appears that many of our seniors are ...

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Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon:

... before, so that's supported. So it appears that to many of our seniors are shopping themselves and getting out. And I think that may be positive that you're getting active, you're moving about, but at the same time, we encourage you to, if you need, you need help, to definitely call us to pick up your groceries or medications. That's what we're here for.

Alain Normand:

All right, thank you Councillor Dhillon. So next we'll go with a question. We'll go to Deb. Deb, you have a question for us? Please go ahead.

Deb:

Very quickly, I just want to thank you for all the town halls because it's great to listen to different issues that are going on in Brampton, so I appreciate you all being on the call. My question is, quickly, how will seniors get their flu shot considering that that should be ramping up in September, October. And my next question is for Dr. Loh, when they say the numbers go down and the virus goes away, but it's going to come back, how does it come back?

Alain Normand:

So maybe we'll let Dr. Loh answer those questions about the flu shot and the second wave.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

Absolutely. I should emphasize, I think Kiki has highlighted that certainly and in our strong recommendations that we've made very clear, seeking medical attention is still considered an essential reason to be out and about of your house. And certainly we recognize that many of our seniors may have medical appointments to the extent of course that you can do them online. Many family doctors, my wife is a family physician, I know that she's moved having her clinic days online happen in person. So certainly if you can, online, but something like a flu shot, especially if it comes around next fall, at least for protection, I would hope that people are still willing to and able to attend family practices, primary care settings, the immunization clinics because those will still be there, and certainly I imagine there'll be run with the full PPE and all those other pieces if the virus is still circulating in the community.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

But make sure that you can get that additional protection because it is important for you to be protected against flu and certainly in addition to Covid-19 obviously. So in terms of the question around a second wave, it's a really good question. And what it is, is you have to remember that the cases that we're reporting on are confirmed cases that are identified through laboratory testing and people that have presented to the healthcare system. There are many people who, in Covid-19 at least, there's a lot of clear evidence that many people may have very mild symptoms similar to a cold or a mild flu, that may still... And essentially we're asking those people to stay at home. And we're not actually asking, I should clarify, there is a Class Section 22 order for anyone who has confirmed or probable Covid.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

So if your symptoms are consistent with respiratory illness that may be Covid, we strongly recommend through the order now that you stay home. Otherwise, we may sanction at least out of the order there. But the idea is that there are lots of people who still have mild illness and we do also know that Covid-19 does transmit to on occasion asymptotically. What we want to do is we want to see a situation where the confirmed cases are getting down to a level, the confirmed daily cases that are coming in, are

getting down to a level that we are able to quickly pick them up through testing and also quickly move to isolate their cases and contacts. And the more that we're able to do that, the more we're able to interrupt those chains of transmission as they occur. So that's why testing capacity has been ramped up. That's why certainly in case and contact management, there's a new provincial contact tracing initiative that's being developed at Public Health Ontario to supplement the existing contact tracing work that we've been doing at Peel Public Health. All those measures are being taken.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

But the reality is that as long as there's mild and pre-symptomatic spread of the virus that's occurring, it will still circulate in the community. So it's a matter of us being vigilant and making sure that we can prevent a second wave by continuing physical distance and continuing to stay home as much as possible. And then when we start loosening those restrictions, making sure that we have the capacity to test widely, quickly and then act quickly on it through case and contact management. So it's a great question and I'm hopeful that a lot of the steps we're taking right now are putting us in a good place that we won't have the second wave or certainly that there is one, it's attenuated, but it all really relies on how much we do now to slow and arrest spread in our community and in our congregate settings. So thank you for the question and back to the moderator.

Alain Normand:

Thank you Dr. Loh. We appreciate that. Before we go on to the next question, I want to remind you that if you have a question you'd like to ask, please press *3 on your phone and the question will be coming up, and then we'll try to get to all the questions by the end of our period. So next we'll go to our next question which is from Ruby. Ruby, do you have a question please?

Ruby:

Yes, I am.

Alain Normand:

Go ahead.

Ruby:

Thank you to Mayor Patrick Brown and all the people that are helping us, like annual staff, so I don't want to mention all their names, but I really appreciate as the senior living in Brampton, me and my husband, that you're doing that you're taking care of us, but when we are seniors we feel protected but most of the time I have my son or a friend of mine doing my groceries. But last time I went to this small grocery store, walking distance to my place. I couldn't believe it what I see because some people, as if Covid-19 is nothing.

Ruby:

The cashier is not even wearing a mask or gloves. No even sanitizer to sanitize every time when a person leaves the counter and everything, and there's no shield in between the cashier and the customer. And I see that, I was a nurse, I see that people don't take it seriously. And the owner of the store was there. I told the owner, "It's not good what you're doing because you are putting the people into... all the people are at risk. Not only all the people and you people and the employee of your stores are at risk, and..."

Alain Normand:

Ruby?

Ruby:

Yes?

Alain Normand:

What I'm going to do is I'm going to ask a Director of Enforcement to maybe give us a little bit of an insight on what we are doing to try to reduce those risks and how it's coming along with the kind of work that we're doing. So maybe, Paul Morrison is the Director of Enforcement. Paul, will you be able to answer that question for us?

Paul Morrison:

Absolutely. Good morning, Ruby. We can tell you that in the stores they're not necessarily required to have the plexiglass in place. They just have to maintain the social distancing. Most of the stores have put good measures within the stores to protect both the employees and the customers and plexiglass is one of them. You'll see it very frequently used in the community. They can wear masks, they can wear face shields. But really, the standard here is the social distancing and to keep that a two meter distance between the customer and the employees.

Alain Normand:

Thank you, Mr. Morrison, Paul Morrison. Thank you for that. So next we'll go to Wanda. Wanda, you have a question?

Wanda:

Yes, please. This is Wanda [Mangie 00:08:13]. I'm with Knightsbridge Seniors. I'm the president. Just got a question for Kiki Ferrara, if she's still there.

Kiki Ferrara:

Yes, I'm here.

Alain Normand:

Go ahead.

Wanda:

Thank you. Kiki, hi. I worked at Brampton Civic so I know how many people over there work so hard and then are working hard even now to prevent this. My question is, I got a few complaints from my seniors about the blood work. When they have to go in for blood work because they've got blood diseases or blood issues, cancers, anything like that, there have been a lot of people in the facility, like in the room there. There have been 30 or 40 people and it doesn't seem to be adhering to the physical distancing. Can you look into that or perhaps you've already done something about it? Could you answer that for me?

Kiki Ferrara:

First of all, thank you, Wanda. It's nice to hear from a former employee of Brampton Civic Hospital and thank you for what you're doing with Knightsbridge Seniors. So the only onsite labs that we have that our [inaudible 00:55:24] affiliated with is through our assessment centers for Covid testing. Any other testing is done in the emergency department or in inside one of our clinics, and we follow very, very strict guidelines. Lawrence may be able to answer a few more questions with respect to the private labs that are out there in the community where you can get blood work. But my suggestion would be, as a healthcare professional, if you're in any situation where you're in a crowded room, I would follow the social distancing personally, whether that institution is following it or not, to keep myself as safe as possible. Lawrence, what would you recommend?

Dr Lawrence Loh:

I would certainly echo that. I mean, to the extent that essential businesses that are still open, which would include presumably external labs. Medical laboratories are considered... I believe that under the provincial order they're considered an essential service. The goal is that the proprietor should be taking steps to encourage physical distancing and enhanced infection prevention and control measures. And so that means things like limiting occupancy, limiting hours of operation, making sure there's adequate spacing between workstations, et cetera. Essentially, the goal is to really limit close contact, limit interactions. And we do have guidance on this for business owners on our website at peelregion.ca/coronavirus. But yeah, if you're ever in a situation where you find that they're not adhering to physical distancing guidelines, you can always... depending on where... well, actually this is Brampton.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

So there is a physical distancing bylaw that's in place in Brampton. And actually, I might defer to our Brampton colleagues and leaders just to sort of... I think it covers off the need for businesses and proprietors to actually maintain a two meter distance. And so it may be a case that if there's repeated challenges that you're seeing in certain settings, you may want to call 311 and certainly we can work with various proprietors to make sure that they're keeping everyone safe. So thank you very much for the question.

Alain Normand:

Thank you very much. Yes, absolutely. Our 311 team has been very busy and has been fielding a lot of calls, but they have the answers to pretty much everything that we've been getting. If they don't, they know where to turn to get those answers for you and we try to answer all your questions as quickly as possible. So definitely, that's the place to go if you're not sure of anything. We have a question online, which is how many requests for groceries has the City of Brampton processed? And I'm going to invite a Daniella, who is the staff lead for the senior support team to give us some answers on some of the numbers of what we've been doing from work.

Daniella:

Okay, good morning. That is a great question. So to date, the taskforce has received over 400 inquiries from the public. Most of these are just general questions that a resident may have, and this has resulted in over 100 deliveries of groceries and medicines through our grocery delivery program. Thank you.

Alain Normand:

Thanks, Daniella. So yes, absolutely. And if anybody needs help in getting access to groceries, we have a system in place. The city is there to help you, and you just go online and send us an email or call 311 again. All right, thank you. Next we'll go to Gary. Gary, you're online.

Gary:

Thank you very much. Thank you to everyone. Just a quick question. My mom's been in the hospital for over a month and she's waiting to be moved into a CANES bed, when she'll eventually go into a long-term nursing home. Are they still transferring patients or are all the homes closed down right now because of the virus? And will they transfer her into a home where somebody does have the virus, I guess?

Alain Normand:

So maybe we'll ask a Kiki, if you can give some answers on that and maybe the Dr. Loh can also pitch in on that.

Kiki Ferrara:

Yes. Thank you for that. So just so you're aware, we had originally received orders from the province with respect to holding transfers back to long-term care homes while the long-term care facility situation stabilized. We did receive new orders last night saying that we could transfer back to a long-term care home. However, that home has to no longer be on outbreak for us to transfer back if it's a newly admitted patient to long-term care, in other words, they're not being readmitted back. So if your mom has been waiting for a bed and she's never been to long-term care, then unfortunately, she has to hold on a bit longer. The order for that has not been released as of yet. I'm also going to ask my colleague, [inaudible 01:00:43] Sheila to comment if she has any other comments about that.

Sheila:

Hi there. Yeah, we are following those directives, and those who are able to return home are returning back to their long-term care following those directives. But yes, unfortunately those initial or new admissions to long-term care is still paused. But as that changes, we do have a group that's following that and we'll be supporting the admission into long-term care.

Kiki Ferrara:

And because your mom is... Sorry, it was your mom, correct? It's your mom, right?

Sheila:

Yeah, it was.

Kiki Ferrara:

Okay. If she's going into a CANES home, those homes are... the retirement homes, we can transfer into those first. It will depend on whether that particular retirement home is in outbreak or not. If you have any very specific question, please feel free to reach out to us at the hospital through your discharge coordinator. If by chance you don't know what that number is, feel free, through the moderator, I can give you my direct number to contact me.

Alain Normand:

All right. Thank you very much. I think next we'll go to the poll, the second poll, before we go anywhere else, before more questions. I'm going to ask Councillor Fortini to guide us through the next poll.

Councillor Pat Fortini:

Thank you, Alain. So the next question of the second poll are, are you aware that many grocery stores offer early shopping hours? Press one, yes. Press two for no.

Alain Normand:

All right. So we'll give you a few minutes to answer those questions. In the meantime, we will go to our next question and we'll ask Rochelle, if you're still online, if you could please ask your question.

Rochelle:

Yes, I'm still online. My question is more of a comment. As a retired registered nurse who's worked through the long-term care facilities, I really and truly hope you've got a system in place that's going to make sure all these good things you're doing right now carry on.

Alain Normand:

All right. Well, thank you for your comment. Definitely there is intention. So I can tell you that right now we've got Councillor Medeiros is working, has been assigned, as a Councillor to take charge of going into the future, what it's going to look like. We know that we're not going to go back to exactly what we had before. There's been a lot of changes, but we're not exactly sure yet what this is going to look like. So Councillor Madeira is going to be taking a lead role in guiding us through that process. How do we reopen services? How do we do it in a safe manner once we get the instructions from Peel House that we can open, and what it's going to look like, what kind of services. And including, are we going to continue to maintain some of those things that were created specifically for the response to Covid?

Alain Normand:

It's one of the questions that we're asking ourselves. I can't tell you what it's going to look like yet because we're really in the early stages of that. But I can confirm to you that it's something that's very important to us as a city and we will do our best to take care of those situations and maintain services to our residents. Our residents are important and we want to do as much as we can for them. So thank you very much. Next we'll go to one more question before we go to the answer to the poll. So we have Pearl. Pearl is on the line.

Pearl:

Yes, I'm here.

Alain Normand:

Please, go ahead with your question.

Pearl:

Yeah, my question is, I know there's a lot of steps and things going on in long term care homes, and I just wondered why seniors are the most vulnerable and why aren't seniors being tested as a rule between the ages of 65 and up.

Alain Normand:

So maybe we'll give that question... We'll ask Dr. Loh, if you can answer that please.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

Happy to answer. It's a great question. So actually in fact, long-term care homes have been priority for testing. We've actually tested 4,500 residents in long-term care settings and retirement home settings in the last week and a half. And as I mentioned in my opening remarks, this is very much a priority population for us. We really want to be arresting transmission in these settings and protecting staff and residents who work there. I would say it's been a priority certainly for us, I feel, at Peel Public Health, together with our partners at the hospital and Ontario Health Central Region and all of the administrators of these homes. Certainly, we have taken strong action on that. In terms of just broader testing of seniors over the age of 65, really we're quite limited in terms of why we would do that at this time, especially if many of you have been staying home.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

Really, the idea is that if you've reduced your transmission risk significantly, it's very limited to be sort of a broad general screening based on age. Really, it's important to more assess the risk of potential Covid transmission exposure. I want to be clear, if you have come in close contact with someone who was a confirmed case of Covid-19, that would absolutely tip over the scales and increase your possibility of getting tested. But certainly, just a blanket kind of screen of seniors in the community, it's fairly limited use because you could get tested on Tuesday for example, and then on Wednesday you could contract the virus if you're not necessarily adhering to the stay at home and physical distancing guidelines. So what we have with the nasal pharyngeal swabs, the swabs that we're using for our current testing, we're really aiming for people who are at an assessed risk of having been exposed and then making sure that they're tested, which is why the focus has been on long-term care and retirement homes at outbreak.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

But I can also share though, there'll be broader testing that's being developed, that's being deployed around the world, which is blood testing, that serologic testing that really figures out if people have had the virus and certainly if they have any immunity at all and what's the nature of that immunity. And so that's a test that is actually a bit more long lasting in terms of the information that it can provide, and helpful versus the point in time swab that that would be done, which is just looking for the virus.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

So it may come to be in the future that we may deploy that blood testing more broadly around the community just to sort of see who may have had it and even just had a mild illness and not necessarily passed it on, et cetera. And at that point, I imagine some seniors would certainly be eligible and part of any broad strategy to test. So at this point in time, the focus is very much on deploying swabs to long-term care and retirement homes. But certainly, if there is any risk of exposure in the community, we would not hesitate to test seniors. They would certainly be a priority population as well, while we continue to wait for word on whether serology, or when serology is going to be deployed in our community. So thanks for the question.

Alain Normand:

All right. Thank you Dr. Loh. So we're going to go now to the second poll. I'm going to ask a Councillor Fortini to give us the results.

Councillor Pat Fortini:

Yeah, thank you. So the poll is done. So the question was, are you aware that many grocery stores offer early shopping hours for seniors? It was 91% of seniors said yes, 9% of seniors said no. So I'm well happy that a lot of the seniors know that there is early shopping. So thank you.

Alain Normand:

That's right. And we're thankful for the grocery stores to actually take that. Interestingly enough, that's one of the things that we'd like to see possibly keeping after this situation is over to give this kind of priority. I think it's a good service.

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Alain Normand:

... to give this kind of priority I think it's a good service. We are certainly talking to grocery stores about that possibility. We're going to keep going with that. Before we go to the next question, we didn't get a chance to hear from Mary Boucher. Mary is a representative from the Region of Peel Public Health. She's manager of strategic initiatives. Mary we're going to give you a chance to give us a few comments about the work that you've been doing with BioHealth on this side. Please go ahead.

Mary Boushel:

Thank you, Alain. Good morning everyone. It's been great to hear from all of you and hear about all the great work that's happening in Brampton to support residents such as yourself and to keep us healthy and safe and really happy to be here. I've been working with my colleagues that's the Region of Peel to convene a community response tables and Alain and the team asked me to share a bit about the work that we're doing there, so I'll do that. So the response table includes a wide range of community, non-profit organizations, funders and representatives from the municipalities of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga. And the last time I checked, we had about just over 90 organizations participating in our calls, which are so far three times a week. And the goal is to help local agencies to support vulnerable and at-risk residents, and support coordination, share information, problem solve in real time, and really just collaborate because these are unprecedented times and we have to.

Mary Boushel:

And so we believe that while the pandemic has had a profound impact on all of us and all of you, there are some vulnerable residents in Peel who are feeling that impact much more acutely, whether it's because of poverty, isolation, health challenges or other life circumstances. And the members of the community response table share an interest in supporting those vulnerable residents. And we've had to be creative in how we do that while also following all the great recommendations that we've been hearing from Public Health about physical distancing, et cetera. So we convene a few times a week virtually of course, to get a better understanding of what the community needs and to develop solutions together. And a lot of this work is happening behind the scenes and you as residents won't necessarily see some of this work happening behind the scenes. But we really believe that this collaboration results in better support and help for residents.

Mary Boushel:

And some amazing examples that we've seen of local collaboration. One group might put up their hand to say that they have food donations and they just don't have volunteers to deliver them. And then

another group will step up with their volunteers and they know of clients who need it, and there you go. And then other situation, we would hear from Peel Housing Corporation, for example, doing outreach to seniors in their buildings and flagging when some needed help and they're not in a position to help themselves and other partners can jump in to fill that gap. So those are just some examples, and there are many, many more. Another way we've been trying to help is to share update for those funding opportunities, such as those native available through the United Way to support agencies in their work during the pandemic. And the Region of Peel has also made available the COVID-19 emergency funding to provide additional funding to the non-profit sector to keep them afloat as they work really hard to help you and other residents in the community.

Mary Boushel:

And as of last week, the region had received 66 applications under that emergency investment program and have granted a total over \$1 million so far. So we were very hopeful that that work will help make its way to those who need it in the community and continue helping the non-profits do the good work that they're doing. And that's all I really have to share at this point. Just is very happy to hear from everyone on the call. I've been listening closely to your comments and questions and what we hear really helps us better understand what the needs are in the community and better respond. So thank you. Thank you Alain, thank you everyone else for your time.

Alain Normand:

All right. Thank you Mary. I appreciate your comments, definitely. Just a couple of things before we go. If you haven't had a chance to ask your question, please dial star three now on your phone. And if we don't get to all the questions today, we will certainly record them and we will try to get back to you and have some answers. But next we're going to go to Mary. Mary, you have a question, please.

Mary Boushel:

Yeah, I do. I was on the call last night too and I gave quite an irate comment with regards to the senior homes and I really feel that the government agencies or public servants were well aware of this situation coming upon the cities and the country and they were really behind the eight ball. I have a 91 year old dad at home and I canceled his home care way before. I called the Lin with my concerns about PP equipment, what they were doing, how were they repairing. I never got a response back. And now I am horrified about what's going on in the senior homes. Now my dad is not getting any support, so of course with our own family, my brother comes in and showers him. My brother has to stay with him while I go and do groceries.

Mary Boushel:

Now I'm a senior, I'm 65 but I feel that there's lot of ageism going on with regards to seniors, like stay in your home, stay in your home. It's ridiculous. Also, I don't think there's enough information about this virus. It's horrible the death we've seen, but I think there's an overreaction. We've had more deaths with other viruses in the past, whether it was avian flu, bird flu, SARS, et cetera. Also, to help your seniors with this prescription nonsense about only one month for pills. You've got the pharmacist stretched beyond their means trying to fill all these orders and they're calling you every two weeks about refilling. So when is that going to change?

Alain Normand:

So Mary-

Mary Boushel:

I also have a-

Alain Normand:

Yeah, Mary. I think a lot of good questions and all that, but I think what I'd like to hear is possibly from MPP Sandhu, what is the province where is the province going with regards to ensuring that our long-term care facilities are being taken care of and some of the questions that you've asked on that. MPP Sandhu, are you able to answer some of this? Are you still on? Maybe not? Okay. So he doesn't seem to be there. So I don't know if Dr Loh, you want to leave a little bit about the long-term care? Maybe not fully-

Dr Lawrence Loh:

Yeah. Yeah. I actually really was hoping to answer this question. I think I certainly hear the frustration, heavy anger and I think there's a lot that has come out of this pandemic that I imagine our colleagues in long-term care and certainly at the ministry of long-term care will be looking into. To our part, at least in Public Health, we have tried to support these settings as best we can through our understanding of the science and in terms of supporting them with the outbreaks. But certainly, the concerns you raise are those that are shared I think widely throughout the community. I want to make very clear that first in Peel Public Health senior settings and the population over the age of 65 was a priority from the get go and continue to be a priority and has been a priority through our expanded response that I described.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

Certainly all the homes that have been tested through the integrated planning table, I don't think there's anything there. I know there's questions around information and the virus, and I think we have to remember that this is a virus that is essentially four months old and much of the evidence and research is still being conducted. And at least from my perspective as a Public Health official, I have certainly committed to providing information about this virus that I'm able to share as quickly as possible, but also have taken the time to ensure with careful, sober second thought that it is credible. Because we do know there has also been a significant pandemic of misinformation and poor guidance, frankly that has also emerged alongside the outpouring of COVID-19. So I think from that perspective, certainly feel the frustration.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

I, like you, and many other people on the call really want to know so much more about this virus. And I can tell you that the information we get, we're sharing as we can. And the last point I wanted to address out of, your very impassioned comments. Speaking to the idea of the number of deaths and certainly compared to other diseases. The reason why we have so few deaths in Canada, and especially in the region of Peel Ontario, is that we actually took actions at the very right time for us to do so. I've spoken in other settings around a golden period of disease control and what you want in a disease that is as infectious as COVID-19 that spread so easily from person to person that is mild in the vast majority of cases are there.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

But seemingly at random can cause fatal outcomes, especially in seniors and those are the underlying medical conditions. But also for those who, random, certainly I have a colleague in New York city who is an ICU doc, has seen some of her own friends, her own colleagues succumb to this virus. Who have

seen, and they're essentially my age and you know middle-aged physicians. And although I never thought I would think of myself as a middle aged physician but I guess I am now. But all that to say in the midst of all this, it was more of an issue that this is a disease that spreads easily and that at a broad population level where everyone's susceptible, we were concerned that we were going to see many severe and fatal outcomes.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

Essentially the overwhelming of the healthcare system that you saw in China, in Italy, in New York. And I think we were very fortunate because we took steps to interrupt transmission during the period where transmission had just started in our community but it had not yet spread far and wide and caused a lot of morbidity and severity. So certainly the picture in our seniors homes is concerning and certainly the balance around, the broader deaths in the community also may make some question whether we did the right thing. And certainly I recognize that many people have made sacrifices to bring this result about, but I want to be very clear that the reason why we are not seeing the deaths and the morbidity that was seen in other settings was that we as a community came together and did the right thing at the right time.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

And it's not a case that this virus is not lethal because we've definitely seen in jurisdictions where left unchecked, it absolutely can be at a broad population scale. So there's lots that we're still learning. Certainly things that colleagues in Public Health and colleagues across the healthcare sector are going to learn from in this. But I want to be absolutely clear that we've taken the best measures that we can to protect the health and wellness of the community. And that has put us on a good trajectory that we're in right now. So thank you. And I'll pass it back.

Alain Normand:

Thank you Dr Loh appreciate this answer. Difficult questions, but so next we'll go to Martha. Martha, please you have your question.

Martha:

Hi. Yes, first of all, thank you all for doing these town hall conferences, greatly appreciated. Thanks for all our healthcare workers and some way my question has been answered, I would be very interested in how and where to sign up for this backyard growing program? I would love to be part of it, so if I can get some answers I would be grateful. Thank you.

Alain Normand:

Absolutely. Thanks Martha. So as we said, we already have about 11 000 people that have signed up. So right now we're on a waiting list, but we can certainly add your name. So there's two ways, either you call 311 and ask to be added on the list, or you go online and you'll see that in, in on the website, under the backyard garden program, you will find a place, there's a form to fill and a that will go to are the people that are coordinating the program for the city. So that's the way to access, if you're not already on the list definitely. But please be aware that there is a waiting list because we had a lot more requests than what we originally thought we were going to get. So there's a bit of a delay here, we're doing the best we can with the resources that we have. So thank you very much. And we have time for one more question. We're going to go to Ajit. Ajit are you there?

Ajit:

Yeah, this is Ajit, thank you very much for online. My question is how much cost it is a for one COVID-19 kit? The second question is if anyone come into the clinic for just checkup, will he be accepted to get his checked up or he will be only checked when serious symptoms are there?

Alain Normand:

So maybe I'll ask Kiki about this, [crosstalk 01:23:14] clinic I go to the assessment and is there a cost for the testing?

Kiki:

So first of all, in terms of every patient who comes to the assessment center, there's obviously no cost for that. There's the system cost obviously for the actual test kit right now they're done very specifically with specific technology in a laboratories across the province. I can't tell you the exact cost, because it would depend on whether we're considering the cost of the labor, et cetera. I will tell you that the cost is secondary and whatever it takes is what we're doing.

Kiki:

What we're trying to make sure is we prioritize who needs to be screened based on the capacity that we do have. I will say that if you come to hospital, you are screened, you are screened to see should you be tested for COVID. A lot of our patients who become inpatients are in fact tested for COVID. It doesn't mean that everyone is at this point. And that's based on direction that Lawrence and Public Health provide us, directions from the province that say what are the screening criteria? We have noticed that the criteria have been changed over time and are a little bit what we call looser, and typical presentations of just cough or cough and fever are not the only things that we'll look for. We will look for some other symptoms that are not typical and it will depend if you are someone who is more vulnerable, who is more elderly, et cetera. So there are still criteria but they're definitely looser than when we started. I don't know if Dr Saha or Dr Loh want to add anything to that.

Dr Lawrence Loh:

[crosstalk 00:16:22]. I've said plenty. So I'll pass it over to you.

Dr Saha:

Yeah, so I mean I think the screening test that you're referring to is only relevant in the context of clinical symptoms being positive and that's what we would look for from the perspective of screening. Having said that, I would also just want to raise awareness of the fact that the presentation of seniors to this disease is somewhat different to what it would be for a younger individual, which is referred to as an atypical presentation. And I would just kind of make the public aware that seniors who have developed a change in their level of cognitive functioning. If you find that there is a change in the level of your functional ability, if there is an increased tendency to falls, and if there is an increased tendency towards a weakness or malaise, these should also be considered to be potential clinical manifestations of underlying COVID-19. However, to come back to your original question based upon the individual concerned, if there was a clinical screening risk for COVID, I think there would be a [inaudible 01:26:29] to progress towards a nasal pharyngeal swab.

Alain Normand:

All right. Thank you doctors, we appreciate that. We've got a couple of minutes, we're going to go to one last question there, we have Angelica is on the line. Please go ahead.

Angelica:

Hi, this is Angelica. First of all, thank for these weekly updates, they're great. My question is I am a senior, last week Friday, I needed medical advice and it was a non COVID situation that I had going on with myself. I wasn't sure whether I should go to emergency or not. So I needed to speak to someone, I could not speak to my own doctor because it was after six o'clock on a Friday night. So I tried to call tele-health. When I explained my situation and this was Friday night, she said, "I'm sorry but I can't get a nurse to get back to you until Saturday morning or Saturday night or Sunday morning." And I'm like, "Wow, I'm guessing this backlog is due to a people calling in about COVID." I'm just assuming.

Angelica:

I tried to call Brampton Hospital to see if I could speak to someone there because as you can imagine, I'm a little fearful about going to emergency, because you're worried about coming into contact with COVID while you're going there for a non coated problem. And I found out too that the urgent care center was closed so I couldn't go there either. So my question is, is there a phone number in Brampton or someone I could call, like a Public Health nurse to get advice to see whether I should have gone to emerge or wait until the next morning to go to a walk-in clinic, which I ended up doing?

Alain Normand:

Maybe Dr Loh, would you have some options? Kiki-

Kiki:

I can answer this. There are two options, provincially now, the provincial government has released a website where you can see a doctor anytime and it's actually called www.seeadoctor.ca. So S-E-E-A-D-O-C-T-O-R.ca (later corrected to www.seethedoctor.ca) There's also several urgent care clinics I know in our region, not related to Osler, so they are private clinics that do have virtual care and longer hours that are open seven days a week. One is called actually Urgent Care Clinic that I know of. So there are several options for you outside of going to the emergency department.

Alain Normand:

Okay. And we have actually posted a website on the city of Brampton website, brampton.ca COVID within our information about health. So definitely if you're looking for that and you don't remember the website, please check out on our website. that should give you access there.

Alain Normand:

So ladies and gentlemen, that's about all the time we have for today. We appreciate having you on the call and certainly quite a large number of people that joined us today, about 645 I'm seeing here so that's great. It's fantastic that citizens are engaged and coming in to talk to us and to ask their questions. I want to thank our panel, all the people on the call that have been there to answer your questions. And I want to wish you a good ongoing, stay safe, stay home unless you absolutely have to. If you need help, please go to our website or call 311. If it's health-related, please call Peel Public Health (905) 799-7700 and we will do our best to provide you with all the services that you need. Please stay safe as we go through this situation and we're going to get through it all together. Thank you very much. Have a good day.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:30:32]