

Ottawa Board of Trade Reveals Roll-out Plan for Free COVID-19 Rapid Testing Kits Starting May 26th for Ottawa Businesses (Under 150 Employees)

For Immediate Release: May 19th, 2021 – Ottawa Board of Trade (OBoT) will begin distributing free COVID-19 rapid testing kits starting **May 26th at 10:00 a.m.** It will all happen at Invest Ottawa's headquarters at Bayview Yards as part of a province-wide plan to provide an estimated 760,000+ kits to small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) before Labour Day Weekend. Larger businesses must get their kits directly from the Government of Ontario.

OBoT President and CEO Sueling Ching says, "These kits are an integral part of the rebound and recovery of Ottawa businesses as they will provide twice weekly screening of employees. This will help protect employees, co-workers and their customers by significantly reducing transmission. A positive test will require an immediate departure from work by the employee and a follow-up test by Ottawa Public Health. This program is part of OBoT's work, since COVID-19 hit our region, to support innovative and creative ways to keep businesses open safely."

Invest Ottawa President and CEO Michael Tremblay says, "We are very pleased to support the Ottawa Board of Trade with the important mission of re-opening our economy safely. In addition to following the guidelines outlined by Ottawa Public Health – in particular, washing hands and wearing masks – rapid antigen screening is another important tool for us to apply in the campaign to control the spread of COVID-19."

This local distribution is partially sponsored by Commissionaires Ottawa, one of the largest private sector employers in the National Capital Region with 3,800+ employees locally, many of them veterans. Above and beyond providing security services, commissionaires have been on the front lines during the pandemic with duties that include: COVID-19 screenings, temperature checks, safety patrols, and enforcement of COVID-19 protocols.

Commissionaires Ottawa CEO and distinguished veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, Capt (N) Paul Guindon (Ret'd), says, "Since COVID-19 became a global crisis, commissionaires have been deployed to shelters, respite centres, long term care homes, pop-up vaccination clinics, vaccine storage centres, and medical supply warehouses. Supporting the Ottawa Board of Trade's efforts to get rapid testing out to the business community as quickly as possible is yet another way we want to help protect people."

OBoT has been mandated to provide the kits to businesses with 150 employees or less. Larger businesses will get their kits directly from the Ontario government. One of those Ottawa-based businesses was part of the pilot project and is a proud member of OBoT.

Ross Video CEO David Ross says, "As a current volunteer with the Ottawa Board of Trade, I was delighted to have Ross participate in the Ontario rapid testing kit pilot program. To see it now being rolled out by OBoT to companies under 150 employees will be a true game changer. Getting these free kits into the hands of SMEs is very important. It will support our collective goal of ensuring the safety of our employees and our customers."

**Rapid Testing Kit Media Launch
10am Wednesday May 26th
Invest Ottawa -- 7 Bayview Station Road**

(All COVID-19 safety protocols will be followed)

*10am - First rapid testing kits to be handed out personally
by Sueling Ching, Paul Guindon and Sonya Shorey from Invest Ottawa*

Registration is mandatory and the website is now open at
<https://www.ottawabot.ca/rapid-antigen-screening-kits>

IMPORTANT: Testing kits will be handed out Monday to Friday from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. and supported by the Rotary Club of Ottawa-Ontario. Registrants must have watched the 5-minute training video prior to picking up the rapid testing kits.

About the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Kits:

- Frequent screening with rapid antigen tests increases the chances of early identification of cases in otherwise asymptomatic individuals.
- This rapid testing initiative applies to businesses permitted to be open under current orders.
- Organizations can test onsite 1-3 times per week and get results in about 15 minutes. The specimen does not require shipping to a lab for processing.
- Employees can self-swab under the supervision of a trained employee or business owner.
- Positive results from a rapid antigen point-of-care test must be confirmed with laboratory-based chain reaction (PCR) testing.
- Rapid testing does not replace public health measures, such as hand washing, wearing a mask, physical distancing, and symptom screening.

About the Ottawa Board of Trade:

The Ottawa Board of Trade is the Voice for Business in the Ottawa region, acting as an independent, non-partisan association representing the interests of all businesses at every level of government to ensure a competitive business climate, economic growth and community prosperity.

About Commissionaires Ottawa:

Commissionaires Ottawa is a private, not-for-profit company that manages the largest digital fingerprinting infrastructure in Canada and provides a diverse range of security services to the private and public sectors. As a member of OBoT and a strong community builder, Commissionaires Ottawa donates generously to causes such as: Commissionaires Ottawa Place (an assisted living retirement residence at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre), Veterans' House (for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness), Pepper Pod Retreat Centre (for female veterans), and two military family resource centres (children's programs).

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