

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2021

Ottawa Board of Trade Rolling Out Free Rapid Tests to SMEs Across Ottawa: A Game Changer for Businesses

Ontario Chamber Network will be distributing rapid tests to help keep Ontario businesses and communities safe through COVID-19 Rapid Screening Initiative

OTTAWA, May 7, 2021– The Ottawa Board of Trade (OBOt) and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Ontario and Canadian governments, have launched the COVID-19 Rapid Screening Initiative. Through this initiative, OBOt will roll out free rapid tests for small- and medium-sized businesses in Ottawa in partnership with Invest Ottawa (IO).

“Chambers of commerce and boards of trade have been indispensable resources in their communities since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Public health and the health of our economy are interdependent. That is why our Board of Trade is proud to distribute rapid tests to small businesses in Ottawa. We hope that through this program, we will be able to curb the spread and reopen our local economy safely. We have been working diligently on a made in Ottawa plan along with Invest Ottawa and other key stakeholders and anticipate being ready to deploy by the last week of May. Further details will be available to our Ottawa businesses in the weeks leading up to the launch,” says OBOt President and CEO Sueling Ching.

The COVID-19 Rapid Screening Initiative will provide free rapid antigen tests for employees of small and medium-sized businesses. The tests will be distributed through participating local chambers of commerce and boards of trade in Ontario. Businesses (including non-chamber members) with 150 employees or less are welcome to participate in this program. The goal of the program is to identify asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 in the workplace that might otherwise be missed, helping to curb the spread in the workplace, at home and around the community in Ottawa.

The Initiative was first successfully piloted in the Waterloo region by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo and Cambridge Chambers of Commerce in partnership with Communitech, the Government of Ontario and Government of Canada.

Through this pilot, the chambers have delivered 120,000 kits to nearly 1,400 businesses in the region. This means that up to 30,000 employees in essential workplaces are receiving regular screening twice weekly in the Waterloo region alone. The COVID-19 Rapid Screening Initiative builds upon the success of this existing program and delivers tests into the hands of small and medium-sized businesses across the province.

“Rapid testing is one of the key ways to keep workplaces as safe as possible during the pandemic as we wait for vaccinations to roll out. It will be an essential part of curbing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities so that we can get on the path to economic recovery faster,” said Rocco Rossi, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

“As the indispensable partner of business, we are proud that many of our member chambers of commerce and boards of trade, including the Ottawa Board of Trade, will be offering this program, distributing rapid tests to small and local businesses across the province. Over 700,000 rapid tests have already been shipped to 25 of our chambers and many more are showing interest in rolling this program out” added Rossi.

[Click here to see which chambers](#) and boards of trade are participating in the program to date. More chambers of commerce and boards of trade will be joining in the coming weeks.

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The Ottawa Board of Trade is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization advocating for business and representing their interests as a key economic partner.

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