

June 29, 2026

MEMO TO: Retirement Home Licensees

FROM: Michèle Sanborn, Assistant Deputy Minister
Policy, Programs and Strategic Partnerships Division
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

SUBJECT: Information on Legionella, Hantavirus and Ebola

I am writing to proactively share information on Legionella, Hantavirus, and Ebola and to highlight key preventive measures to support licensed retirement homes (RHs). At present, the risk of Ebola and Hantavirus in Ontario's RHs is considered low. Legionella, however, is common in the Ontario environment, with cases typically increasing during the summer months.

Licensed RH operators are encouraged to maintain strong Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices and regular heating ventilation and air condition (HVAC) system maintenance to help protect residents, staff, and the broader RH community from current and emerging public health risks. IPAC Hubs remain available to support homes in building IPAC capacity and adapting best practices. For contact information, please reach out to IPACHubs@ontario.ca.

The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility continues to work closely with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH), which is actively monitoring Legionella, Hantavirus, and Ebola in collaboration with local, provincial, and federal partners. Updates will be provided as new information becomes available.

1. Legionella

Legionella can multiply in poorly maintained man-made water systems such as cooling towers, hot tubs, sprinkler systems, humidifiers, and decorative fountains, with individuals over the age of 60 most at risk. Infection occurs when aerosolized droplets containing the bacteria are inhaled. Proper system maintenance and effective water management planning are key to reducing the risk of transmission and preventing outbreaks.

Recent Legionella clusters in Hamilton and Toronto have indicated an earlier-than-expected start to the season, which typically peaks in July. Homes are advised to

increase surveillance, be prepared for rapid outbreak response, and proactively communicate risk within the home, given higher-than-usual case counts. Staff are encouraged to remain vigilant for legionellosis in residents presenting with pneumonia. Public Health Ontario [resources](#) are available for additional guidance.

2. Hantavirus

Recent reporting on a hantavirus outbreak aboard the cruise ship *MV Hondius* has been associated with the Andes virus, a strain found in South America. The Andes virus is the only type of hantavirus known to spread from person-to-person, but transmission is generally limited to situations involving close contact with an infected individual. All individuals associated with this outbreak were closely monitored by public health officials around the world, including here in Canada, and further transmission is not expected. Public Health Ontario [resources](#) are available for additional guidance.

3. Ebola Virus Disease

On May 15, 2026, an Ebola outbreak was declared in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Although the risk remains low, routine IPAC practices are important for preparedness and preventing transmission. Ebola virus is not naturally present in Canada, and transmission requires direct contact with blood or bodily fluids of an infected individual. Staff, volunteers, caregivers, and visitors can reduce risk by following travel advisories, exercising caution abroad, adhering to public health guidance on return, staying home when ill, and seeking timely medical advice. Public Health Ontario [resources](#) are available for additional guidance.

As always, thank you for your efforts to maintain safe and effective RH operations while protecting the safety and well-being of residents and staff. The Ministry will continue to work closely with OCMOH and keep the sector informed of any relevant developments.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Michèle Sanborn

c: Peter Kaftarian, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Marsha Pinto, Director, Retirement Homes Branch, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health
Lucy Becker, Interim Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority
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