

Chief Medical Officer of Health

Médecin hygiéniste en chef

Public Health Division  
11th Floor, Hepburn Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1R3

Division de la santé publique  
Édifice Hepburn, 11e étage  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1R3

Telephone: (416) 212-3831  
Facsimile: (416) 325-8412

Téléphone: (416) 212-3831  
Télécopieur: (416) 325-8412

October 6, 2014

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: Health workers, health sector employers and other health system partners**

**RE: A reminder about the Hajj and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus**

---

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Public Health Ontario continue to monitor and assess the risk posed by the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

The Hajj 2014 is taking place this year between approximately October 2 and 7, 2014 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This spiritual pilgrimage is the largest annual gathering of people in the world. The large numbers of people expected to be in attendance during this year's Hajj may increase the risk of transmission of certain infectious diseases, such as influenza and meningococcal disease. Travellers should also be aware that cases of MERS-CoV continue to be identified in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Although no confirmed cases were detected in association with the 2013 Hajj, several travel-associated cases were reported in 2014 in pilgrims returning from Umrah, a religious pilgrimage that can occur at any time of year. The Public Health Agency of Canada has posted a [Travel Health Notice](#) about The Hajj 2014.

As of October 2, 2014, the [World Health Organization has reported](#) that there have been 853 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV including at least 301 related deaths. The risk posed by MERS-CoV in Ontario continues to be low. However, it is important that health workers are prepared to detect, investigate and implement appropriate occupational health & safety and infection prevention & control measures in the event that a case is exported from the Middle East to Ontario.

The ministry has issued [Guidance for Health Workers and Health Sector Employers on MERS-CoV](#). As the global public health community continues to understand this virus better, there may be further changes to the ministry's guidance. I encourage health workers and health sector employers to review the information on this website regularly to ensure you are following the latest guidance.

As always, the ministry is available to support you during urgent situations that may arise. You can contact the ministry on a 24/7 basis through the Health Care Provider Hotline at 1-866-212-2272.

*Original signed by*

David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC  
Interim Chief Medical Officer of Health