



Katz A, Li T, James L, Siegel JA, O'Campo P. 2023. Systematically omitting indoor air quality: sub-standard guidance for shelters, group homes and long-term care in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Critical Public Health*, 33(5), 683–696. DOI: [10.1080/09581596.2023.2262736](https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2023.2262736)

Public Health Ontario (PHO) is mandated by legislation to share scientific advice during infectious disease outbreaks and help reduce health inequities in Ontario, Canada

Key Points.

- In October 2021, our team reviewed Public Health Ontario's (PHO's) public, written COVID-19 guidance for congregate settings like long-term care, shelters, detention centres and supportive housing. We found that PHO didn't mention ventilation or filtration in any these documents.
- PHO did, however, include references to ventilation in parallel guidance for schools, summer camps and clinical offices during that same time period.
- Given that ventilation and filtration help reduce transmission of COVID-19 and other airborne diseases, and the devastating toll COVID-19 has taken in congregate settings such as long-term care, this omission is significant.
- PHO introduced references to ventilation and filtration in their public, written guidance for congregate settings beginning in June 2022.
- However, to our knowledge, PHO has not undergone a transparent, public and comprehensive process to inform all congregate settings that public health guidance for COVID-19 now includes ventilation and filtration.
- To fill in the gaps identified by our study, our team produced plain language guidance, [Reducing transmission of COVID-19 through improvements to indoor air quality: a checklist for community spaces](#). In addition, the indoor air quality experts on our team are offering [personalized, online consultations to community spaces](#) who wish to use measures like ventilation and filtration to help reduce transmission of airborne diseases. Links are to <https://maphealth.ca/ventilation/>.
- The study and associated Knowledge Translation initiatives were produced through an ongoing and expanding interdisciplinary partnership between experts in indoor air quality, engineering, public health, epidemiology and knowledge translation from Unity Health Toronto, University of Waterloo, University of Toronto and Queen's University.

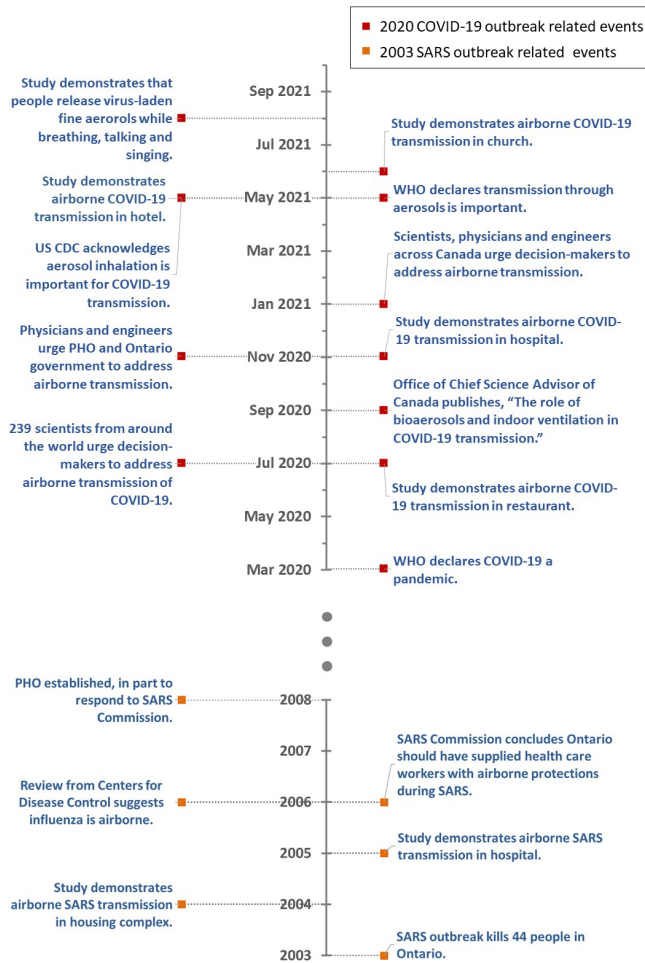


Figure 1. SARS and COVID-19 timeline in Ontario.

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