

May 19, 2020

Dear Simcoe and Muskoka large employers:

As the Province of Ontario moves toward decreasing public health restrictions as a part of the [Reopening Ontario after COVID-19](#) framework, I wish to reach out to employers, in particular larger employers in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka with information to support you in your efforts as essential workplaces in ensuring the safety of your employees and the public against coronavirus (COVID-19).

Large employers, such as those in the manufacturing sector have a number of risks associated with their operations. A number of large employers, in particular manufacturing plants in Ontario, Canada, and globally have struggled in the containment of COVID-19. These settings, where a large congregation of employees interact and work collectively on tasks do provide for ideal locations for viral transmission, in particular where employees work within a 2 meter range.

In order to support employers, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) has provided a number of resources for essential workplaces that are [linked in our website](#). Further, the [Province of Ontario](#) has provided sector-specific guidelines and posters to help protect workers, customers and the general public from COVID-19 in Ontario. These guidelines will assist employers in the development of COVID-19 plans that address (among others topics) employee hand hygiene, surveillance, personal protective equipment, physical distancing, symptom reporting and screening, and addressing self-isolation and return to work for ill workers.

In addition to the resources provided by the Province, SMDHU wishes to stress the need to cohort staff, in particular for large employers. 'Cohorting' or 'bubbling' refers to the act of ensuring that staff that work together performing similar tasks should remain as a 'bubble' or team during breaks (i.e. lunch), meetings, or in entering/leaving the facility where possible with limiting interaction with others. The act of cohorting limits contact with employees in the organization outside of the 'bubble', which in the event of a positive COVID-19 case within the bubble, limits the potential spread of the virus to more people than necessary. This is advantageous since the employer limits the number of 'close contacts' that would be required to isolate (and therefore not be permitted to work) and more importantly, limit a large scale outbreak in the facility.

Should you have any questions in relation to materials and resources to assist your business, please contact our health connection line at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

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Medical Officer of Health

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