

June 8, 2020

Dear Anti-Racism Event Organizer and/or Participant:

Re: SMDHU Guidance on Anti-Racism Rallies and Safe Protesting to Protect Against COVID-19

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) acknowledges that racism is an important public health issue that exists in our province and our local communities. Systemic racism affects the health of racialized populations who can experience discrimination, higher rates of poverty, precarious and under employment, and systemic disadvantages within housing, education, and public health systems.¹

We are encouraged that many citizens in Simcoe and Muskoka are taking a stand to inspire change and to stop systemic racism as part of recent protests and events around the globe. However, given the ongoing transmission of COVID-19 in our area we strongly encourage those who choose to participate in organized protests and anti-racism events to do so in the safest possible way to protect themselves and others by taking the following steps:

- Do not attend events if you are ill or have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, or are in self-isolation as a COVID-19 case or contact.
- Practise physical distancing to reduce exposure to other people — this means staying at least two metres away from anyone outside your household.
- Wear a [non-medical mask](#) when in public.
- Frequently [wash your hands](#) with soap and water if possible and bring alcohol-based hand sanitizer with you to the event.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth and avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Attend outdoor events versus indoor events to encourage spacing of people.
- Consider alternatives (e.g. signs, banners) to shouting or chanting to avoid spreading droplets.

In addition to public protests, we also encourage individuals to consider alternate ways to participate such as using social media and virtual protests, especially for those who are sick or immune compromised.

Regardless of the way individuals choose to participate in anti-racism events, we all must remember that COVID-19 remains a threat to our communities. Therefore, as people and communities stand together to stop the spread of racism, we must also maintain vigilance and continue to work together to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

Reference:

1. National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. Let's Talk Racism and Health Equity. http://nccdh.ca/images/uploads/comments/Lets_Talk_Racism_and_health_equity_EN_web.pdf

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