

June 30, 2020

Dear municipalities in Simcoe County, the District of Muskoka, the Cities of Barrie and Orillia, and of the four First Nations located in Simcoe Muskoka:

I am writing in response to an inquiry that we received on the question of municipal council meetings being held in person with members of the public attending.

On Friday, June 12, 2020, the Province of Ontario commenced Phase 2, Stage 2 of the [Re-Opening Ontario Plan](#). With the initiation of Stage 2, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) provides the following communications with regards to your respective public council and other public government meetings that you may have scheduled over the duration of Phase 2, Stage 2 requirements, and potentially beyond.

In accordance with [Ontario Regulation 52/20](#) (*Organized Public Events, Certain Gatherings*), gatherings remain limited to 10 persons. During such gatherings, SMDHU also advises that physical distancing between individuals take place in ensuring a distance of 2 meters or greater. SMDHU acknowledges that while some workplaces may have more than 10 people in their workplace including public places such as grocery stores and other shopping locations, these are settings that are required to do so in order to fulfill their core mandate and thus are clearly permitted under the provincial re-opening. Further, SMDHU has not received guidance to date from the provincial government with respect to the matter of public council or government meetings, including the issue of permitting such meetings to take place with more than 10 people present. In lieu of this guidance on public council or government meetings, SMDHU advises that organizing public meetings of greater than 10 people during Stage 2 is not recommended at this time.

SMDHU suggests exploring alternative means of seeking public input during stage 2 and ideally for the duration of the pandemic as an ongoing preventative measure. Such alternative means include [electronic council meetings](#) with public access which is in alignment with [Bill 187](#) which allows for quorum to be counted if municipal council members are participating virtually with all other council meeting requirements remaining. In discussions with the Association of Municipalities in Ontario (AMO), they have advised that they have worked with the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) and the Municipal Information Systems Association (MISA) on virtual meeting guidelines to fulfill all the Municipal Act requirements during virtual meetings including committee meetings which can be found [here](#).

SMDHU remains committed to providing web updates on the provincial Emergency Orders and information for the public and our municipalities with regards to public gatherings. Further information pertaining to COVID-19 can be found at the following page: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/COVID-19>.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

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Medical Officer of Health

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