



SPECIAL STATEMENT FROM

SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT'S

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, **DR. CHARLES GARDNER**

November 24, 2020

To all residents of County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka:

As the transmission of COVID-19 continues to grow in Simcoe Muskoka, and indeed throughout the rest of the province and the country, we are facing a critical time in our fight against this disease. We must increase our efforts to contain its spread. This second wave of transmission impacts and threatens our health and lives, and the ability of our healthcare system to manage the increased demands on its services.

Our local data indicate that COVID-19 cases in our area are at the highest levels to date, confirming the upward surge of this disease, placing us in the Orange - Restrict level of the province's COVID-19 Response Framework. Furthermore, in keeping with provincial projections we are on track for much higher disease levels unless we take more action to curb its spread.

The key factor contributing to transmission is close and unprotected contact between individuals in both work and social settings, which then spreads easily within households. Since September we have observed a substantial increase in workplace transmission, often resulting in outbreaks, and in related household clusters of COVID-19 cases.

In keeping with my messages in recent weeks to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Simcoe Muskoka and in alignment with the provincial COVID-19 Response Framework, I am asking all residents of our area to take the following actions immediately:

Close Contact, Gatherings and Events

- Limit close contact to your household (the people you live with). Individuals who live alone, including seniors, may consider having exclusive, close contact with another household to help reduce the negative impacts of social isolation.
- Maintain two metres of physical distancing from everyone else.
- Wear a face covering indoors, outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained, or if wearing one is required.
- Virtual gatherings or events are the safest way to visit or recognize occasions with people outside your household.
- Adhere to provincial and applicable local restrictions on public and private gatherings.

Travel within Ontario

- Individuals and families in higher transmission areas should avoid travel to lower transmission areas (e.g. from Red to Orange, from Yellow to Green) except for essential reasons.

Inter-provincial Travel

- Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others.
- Individuals and families who consider travelling to another province for essential reasons during the holidays should:
 - Consider the risk associated with travelling. This includes COVID-19 transmission in the other province, entry requirements (e.g. quarantine) of some other provinces, etc.
 - Self-quarantine, or drastically reduce close contact with others 10 to 14 days before travelling and after returning home. This will help lower the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- General (Ontario) public health advice, as well as any rules and regulations of the other province, should be followed.

General Advice

- Stay home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly.
- Cover your cough.
- Download the COVID Alert mobile app.
- Get tested if you have symptoms compatible with COVID-19, or if you've been advised of exposure by the health unit or through the COVID Alert mobile app.



SPECIAL STATEMENT FROM

SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT'S

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, **DR. CHARLES GARDNER**

I am deeply aware of how challenging the months since the pandemic began have been to all of us in so many ways – emotionally, physically, socially and financially. I know that the additional adjustments I am now asking you to make will further challenge you and your loved ones, particularly as we approach the holiday season. But it is only through our personal and societal actions that we will be able to collectively slow the spread of COVID-19, allowing us to keep our communities safe and healthy and our schools, organizations and businesses open. This is hard news for us all, although the recent news of the impending arrival of effective vaccines throughout 2021 provides optimism for the year ahead.

I am asking you to do your part now to protect yourselves and those you love, and to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely
Dr. Charles Gardner
Medical Officer of Health