

December 3, 2021

To the CAOs of the municipalities within the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka:

Re: Increasing COVID-19 transmission in Simcoe Muskoka and Community Events

On [November 26, 2021](#), I communicated the importance for our municipalities and recreational partners to advise the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) of larger sporting and recreational events at least two weeks prior to the event occurring. This notification of such events would be provided through you to SMDHU for activities and/or events that take place at multiple venues, occur over multiple days, and/or have an attendance of over 1000 persons (participants, spectators and staff). This communication coincided with two letters of instruction for [businesses and organizations](#) and [recreational fitness and sports](#) settings which were issued on November 23, 2021. Since these communications, unfortunately our COVID-19 cases have continued to rise at a current weekly incidence of more than 80 cases per 100,000 persons as of December 2, 2021 which represents a doubling over the past three weeks.

This places us among the health units with the highest incidence in the province, well over the present provincial incidence (which was 36.7 cases per 100,000 population per week from November 21 to 27). The majority of these local cases have been among people who are not fully vaccinated; although the largest age group affected is children between 5 to 11 years of age (who have only very recently become eligible for vaccination), the majority are among youth and young to middle-aged adults. We are also seeing a rise in hospital and ICU admissions from COVID-19. This speaks to the importance of all eligible individuals seeking full immunization and all residents and visitors abiding by the required public health measures, including mask use, distancing, and self-isolation and testing for those with symptoms or who are close contacts of a COVID-19 case.

With this rise we are seeing an increase in outbreaks and clusters of cases in a range of community settings, including schools, businesses, community centres, and workplaces. In some cases, members within households, and gatherings with members from outside of households, have been determined to be the source of transmission, even with many of those individuals being vaccinated.

As a result, I am requesting your assistance as municipal leaders in supporting your own scarce resources and the resources of our health care and public health partners. I wish to remind you and ask for your diligence and follow up with your staff in ensuring adherence to the SMDHU November 23, 2021 [letter of instruction to businesses and organizations](#) along with the *Reopening Ontario Act and Ontario Regulation 364/20*.

Accordingly, I am providing the following points of reference to serve as reminders of provincial and local requirements for yourselves and in communication with your staff:

☐ **Barrie:**
15 Sperling Drive
Barrie, ON
L4M 6K9
705-721-7520
FAX: 705-721-1495

☐ **Collingwood:**
280 Pretty River Pkwy.
Collingwood, ON
L9Y 4J5
705-445-0804
FAX: 705-445-6498

☐ **Cookstown:**
2-25 King Street S.
Cookstown, ON
L0L 1L0
705-458-1103
FAX: 705-458-0105

☐ **Gravenhurst:**
2-5 Pineridge Gate
Gravenhurst, ON
P1P 1Z3
705-684-9090
FAX: 705-684-9887

☐ **Huntsville:**
34 Chaffey St.
Huntsville, ON
P1H 1K1
705-789-8813
FAX: 705-789-7245

☐ **Midland:**
A-925 Hugel Ave.
Midland, ON
L4R 1X8
705-526-9324
FAX: 705-526-1513

☐ **Orillia:**
120-169 Front St. S.
Orillia, ON
L3V 4S8
705-325-9565
FAX: 705-325-2091

- Staff social gatherings should be conducted remotely to avoid larger groups of individuals congregating that can help to spread the virus. While the desire to hold holiday celebrations remains strong given the collective stress we have all been experiencing, the risk associated with gatherings at this time remains high and may result in compromising critical operations in your municipalities in the event that staff become ill and must isolate.
- Ensure that your COVID-19 safety plan is updated (as described in Section 3.3 of O. Reg 364/20) and as referenced in my letter of instruction of November 23, 2021. This plan shall include (among other requirements) staff active screening (which shall be conducted daily), physical distancing, mask use, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, and the preventing and controlling of crowding. Note that the safety plan shall be posted in a conspicuous place where it is most likely to come to the attention of individuals working in or attending your office.
- Enable remote work for employees, where reasonably possible, to reduce the number of workers exposed to the risk of transmission at the workplace.
- Ensure that any person in the indoor area of your municipal offices/settings, or in a municipal vehicle that is operating as part of municipal operations, wears a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless exempt under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020* and associated Regulations. Included in this requirement is the need to ensure that, where reasonably possible, physical distancing between workers by at least 2 metres takes place throughout the premises of the workplace, and during eating and rest periods (e.g., lunchrooms, change rooms).
- Ensure that your recreational facilities and staff are aware of the recently updated COVID-19 vaccination requirements for participants, volunteers, coaches and officials included in the November 23 [letter of instruction associated with organized sports and recreational fitness](#).
- In addition to my November 26 letter associated with larger sporting and recreational events, I request that if your municipality is aware of large community gatherings of any kind that exceed 500 persons, that you please notify the health unit to ensure that the event meets the requirements of the *Reopening Ontario Act*, [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#), and my respective [letters of instruction for businesses and organizations](#) and [recreational fitness and sports](#). Notification should be provided to an SMDHU Public Health Inspector using the following options:
 - By phone at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8811, Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm, or
 - By email at HC.PHI@smdhu.org

As we continue to monitor the increasing transmission of COVID-19 in Simcoe Muskoka and do all we can to control and reduce its spread, including actively monitoring and preparing for the arrival of the new and possibly more transmissible Omicron variant of concern, I am considering the potential to reinstate the reapplication of capacity limits that were lifted by the province in October. However, adhering to these recommendations and requirements provided above will assist in reducing the spread of the virus moving forward, and hopefully will help to avoid the need to take this undesirable step.

As municipal leaders, I sincerely appreciate your ongoing efforts in protecting our communities and working with SMDHU in communicating our messages to residents and your staff. Together, I am

hopeful we can stabilize and then reverse our increasing community transmission of COVID-19 and ensure a safe holiday season ahead for our communities.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

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

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