

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, September 18, 2020

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### **Worrisome rise in COVID-19 cases a reminder to shrink social circles, gatherings**

**SIMCOE MUSKOKA** – As local cases of COVID-19 sharply rise to numbers not seen since the spring, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is asking the public to shrink their social circles as much as possible to those within their own household and to be cautious to reduce their exposure within the community.

“As our social interactions have increased in the summer, so too have our COVID-19 cases, which is worrisome at this time when we are just now returning to school, and for the more vulnerable in our communities,” said Dr. Colin Lee, SMDHU’s associate medical officer of health. “We need people to scale back on their get-togethers/gatherings, and to remember to be cautious with people not in their household, even if they are in their social circle of 10. Social circles are not invincible to COVID-19.”

There have been 42 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (as of Thursday) in Simcoe Muskoka for the week of September 13<sup>th</sup>. This is the highest number of weekly cases since the week of May 10<sup>th</sup> when the region saw 44 cases, and the week still has not ended. The increase in cases includes clusters in multiunit dwellings and households, and one case related to a school staff member.

“This pandemic has been difficult for all of us and we know that everyone is trying to do their best,” said Dr. Lee. “What we need to do now is continue to work together, and to look out for one another, so that we can live with this pandemic as safely and as normally as possible until it’s over.”

To keep everyone safe, including those returning to school and those living in long-term care homes:

- Shrink your close contacts (the people you can get close to such as hugging and touching) as much as possible to only those people within your own household and those whose well-being requires or is dependent on it.
- Think carefully about how often and where you go out to in the public, and try to limit to what is essential and avoid crowded spaces.
- Limit social gatherings, and keep the number of people in your gatherings and get-togethers to 10 people or less indoors, or 25 or less outdoors; with people outside of your household, practice physical distancing, or wear a mask if you can’t.
- Parents should screen children for symptoms of COVID-19 every day before they leave for school; if a child has even one symptom, they should stay home and self-isolate, and get tested.

People are also reminded to continue to practice physical distancing, wear a mask in indoor public spaces, and outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained, practice hand hygiene, self-monitor for symptoms and if you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay home and get tested.

For more information on COVID-19, visit the health unit’s [COVID-19 website](#), including [Frequently Asked Questions](#) or call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.