

November 24, 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:

**Re: Recommendation from the Medical Officer of Health to prohibit access to their recreational facilities to individuals whose primary residence lies within the Red/Control and the Grey/Lockdown areas**

In my [correspondence dated August 10, 2020](#), I noted the very real risk that “COVID-19 (could) very easily surge into new waves”; tragically this is taking place, leaving us with the great task of bringing under control a second wave that is rivalling the first.

In response to this, the province has released and then revised its [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open —Lockdown Measures](#), designating the municipalities within health units within a system of colour-coded levels for public health measures based on indicators of COVID-19 transmission and their impact on the health system.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the Framework, the municipalities within the territory of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) are now designated by the province as Orange/Restrict. This is an evolving situation, with a very high potential for us to continue to increase in our weekly case count, and thus to progress into the Red/Control or even the Grey/Lockdown levels. In keeping with our mandate to protect and promote health, and to prevent disease, SMDHU will continue to provide guidance, to communicate on these requirements, and on the overall situation to our communities, and to take additional action when warranted to control COVID-19.

With the designation of a number of municipal regions/health units in the province within the Red/Control and the Grey/Lockdown levels, reflecting a higher incidence of COVID-19 than is presently the case in Simcoe Muskoka, there is the increased potential for people from these areas to seek access to the recreational facilities of the municipalities in the County of Simcoe and the District of Muskoka. This carries with it the added risk of transmission both among such individuals, and to others who live here. For this reason the COVID-19 Response Framework strongly recommends that “individuals and families in higher transmission areas should avoid travel to lower transmission areas (ie. from Red to Orange, from Yellow to Green) except for essential reasons”. Thus in keeping with this, I strongly recommend at this time that the municipalities of Simcoe and Muskoka prohibit access to their recreational facilities to individuals whose primary residence lies within the [Red/Control and Grey/Lockdown areas](#).

<sup>1</sup> This document presents a summary of the zones in Ontario’s response framework. Please refer to [O. Reg. 82/20](#), (Lockdown) [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (Red-Control) and [O. Reg. 364/20](#) (Green-Prevent, Yellow-Protect, and Orange-Restrict) or a full list of businesses and organizations permitted to operate, including the associated public health and workplace safety measures.

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Cookstown, ON  
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705-458-1103  
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☐ **Gravenhurst:**  
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☐ **Huntsville:**  
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705-789-8813  
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☐ **Midland:**  
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Midland, ON  
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705-526-9324  
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☐ **Orillia:**  
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705-325-9565  
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From a legal review that we recently conducted we learned that municipalities have “the authority, of a natural person, to limit the admission of persons on (their) property” and thus can take such action as an important contribution to the control of COVID-19.

Beyond this measure, I continue to recommend the precautions outlined in my [prior correspondence](#), including those specified on August 10, 2020 addressing the potential for transmission within the premises of municipalities.

As the pandemic continues to unfold, I will continue to monitor the situation and to issue communications, recommendations, and when necessary orders under the Health Protection and Promotion Act and letters of instruction, akin to those that [I have issued in the past](#). Given reports that I have received recently of increased visitation to restaurants, bars and other establishments in our communities by individuals from the Red/Control and the Grey/Lockdown zones, and the provincial advice for travel from such areas to be restricted to be for essential purposes only, I am presently considering additional measures that I may take to address this risk. I will also be proceeding soon with a letter of instruction to all workplaces, strengthening the provincial regulations already in place, in order to address the transmission that SMDHU has documented in these settings.

With the vaccination of the population against COVID-19 on the horizon there is renewed hope, and thus all the more reason to redouble our efforts, though it will probably only be by late 2021 that we will have achieved a level of vaccination necessary to protect the population.

As always, I note the critical importance of municipalities and commend the actions taken by our municipal leaders to control COVID-19 in Simcoe Muskoka.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

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

CG:MW:cm

cc. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Members of Provincial Parliament for Simcoe and Muskoka