

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Additional COVID-19 public health measures strongly recommended for Simcoe Muskoka**

**SIMCOE MUSKOKA** – Dr. Charles Gardner, Simcoe Muskoka’s Medical Officer of Health, today issued a special statement to all residents of Simcoe Muskoka asking that they increase their efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

“Since September we have observed a substantial increase in household clusters of COVID-19 cases, and in each cluster, every person in the household has been infected,” said Dr. Gardner. “We are on track for much higher disease levels unless we take more action to curb its spread, and that includes actions as individuals within our work, social and household settings.”

As of today, November 24, Simcoe Muskoka has recorded 1938 cases of COVID-19 with 52 deaths. Since the beginning of the month, there have been approximately 40 household clusters of the disease, affecting about 100 people.

The recommended actions in Dr. Gardner’s statement include:

**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 and
- Get tested if you have symptoms compatible with COVID-19, or if you've been advised of exposure by your local public health unit or through the COVID Alert mobile app.

“This pandemic has been extremely challenging for all us and I know that the additional actions I am asking for are difficult, particularly as we approach the holiday season,” he said. “However, the only way we are going to slow the spread of COVID-19, which will allow us to keep our communities safe and healthy and our schools, organizations and businesses open, is through our own actions as individuals and as a society.”

Dr. Gardner also today issued an advisory letter to municipalities strongly recommending that they prohibit access to their recreational facilities to those whose primary home lies within the Red and Grey levels of Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework. The movement of people from communities with a higher incidence of COVID-19 than Simcoe Muskoka carries with it the added risk of transmission, both among those travelling to Simcoe Muskoka, and to those locally. The advice is supported by the Framework, which strongly recommends that “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.”

For more information on the [special statement](#) and [letter to municipalities](#), see the health unit's [COVID-19 pages](#), or call Health Connection to speak with a public health professional weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520).