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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**Monday, March 2, 2020**

**Local Health Partners Continue to Work Together in Preparation for Potential COVID-19 Cases**

Although the risk of becoming ill from COVID-19 continues to be low in Ontario, the local Health Unit and its community health partners are continuing to work together to ensure they are prepared should a case develop locally.

Since COVID-19 was first identified in Ontario, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit has been working with Northumberland Hills Hospital, Ross Memorial Hospital, Campbellford Memorial Hospital, Haliburton Highlands Health Services and its primary health care partners to ensure all organizations are kept up-to-date on information and changes coming from the Ministry of Health. This includes sharing resources like the evolving case definitions, testing protocols, as well as infection prevention and control guidance and support and updated fact sheets on COVID-19. As well, the Health Unit provides support to the health care partners to ensure active screening protocols are in place and that appropriate health care staff have been fit tested for the proper protective equipment.

“There have been a number of improvements made in the way we prepare for wide-spread illnesses since we experienced SARS,” says Dr. Noseworthy, Medical Officer of Health for the HKPR District Health Unit. “Across the province we have seen improvements in communication about the illness and cases, improved laboratory testing protocols and quicker test results shared with health professionals for the stringent contact follow-up and management involving potential cases. The bottom line is that we are prepared for if, and when, we may see a case locally.”

Dr. Noseworthy says that seasonal respiratory illnesses, including influenza, are still circulating in the community. As well, it is important to remember that most people who have become ill with COVID-19 have experienced just mild symptoms and have recovered fully. The risk of serious illness appears to rise with age and the presence of other complicating factors. People who have died from the virus in other countries have tended to be older and have had multiple health issues that weakened their immune systems and put them at greater risk.

To remain healthy, the Health Unit recommends the following:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or arm.
- Stay home if you or a family member are ill.
- Get your flu shot to protect you from the flu.
- Avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care homes if you are sick.

If you are ill and must visit a hospital emergency department, clinic or other healthcare provider, call ahead or tell them right away when you arrive that you have a respiratory illness and wear a mask while waiting to be seen. This allows health care providers to take steps to reduce the potential spread of illness.

Be prepared to identify your travel history and/or potential contact history with COVID-19 so that paramedics and/or the health care provider are appropriately prepared to assist you.

- Call your local health unit or health care provider if you become sick with a cough and/or fever AND have returned from an affected area in the past 14 days or have had close contact with an ill person who is either under investigation for COVID-19 or is a confirmed case.
- If you have severe respiratory symptoms, call 911 and explain both your travel history and symptoms to arrange swift and safe transport.

For more information on COVID-19, call the Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577, ext. 5020, or visit [www.hkpr.on.ca](http://www.hkpr.on.ca). After hours, people can call Telehealth Ontario for medical advice toll-free at 1-866-797-0000. People are also encouraged to continue to rely on credible sources of information about COVID-19, including daily updates at:

- The Ontario Ministry of Health website ([www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus))
- Public Health Agency of Canada website ([www.canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.canada.ca/coronavirus))

### **Guidance for Travellers**

Residents are advised to monitor and follow Canadian Travel Advisories as well as alerts and advisories in the travel destination and act accordingly. Specific requirements are in place in Ontario for those with travel to some affected areas to support rapid identification and case management. For guidance on self-isolation, self-monitoring and reporting of symptoms after travel to an affected area, please consult the travel health advice from the Public Health Agency of Canada website ([www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html))

Consult your health care provider as soon as possible if you have concerns about your symptoms or have a travel history to a region where COVID-19 is occurring or if you have had close contact with an ill person who is either under investigation for COVID-19 or is a confirmed case.

### **Additional Quotes:**

"At HHHS we are continuing to work in close partnership with our local primary care providers and the Public Health Unit, and we are taking the necessary steps to ensure our staff and physicians can continue to safely meet the health needs of our patients, residents, clients, and the community." – Carolyn Plummer, President and CEO, Haliburton, Highlands Health Services.

"The Haliburton Family Medical Centre and the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team continue to work closely with community health care partners. Protocols for screening and testing are in place to protect our patients, physicians, and all staff. " - Kim Robinson, Executive Director, HHHFT, and Office Manager, HFMC.

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