

May 11, 2020

Dear Cottage Association President:

As Huron, Perth and the rest of Ontario continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, I ask for your help in supporting and sharing the Chief Medical Officer of Health's message to stay safe and stay home at your primary residence. I know that normally at this time of year many people begin spending time at their cottages and seasonal residences. However this is a year like no other, in which we have all been managing pandemic COVID-19, which is still circulating in our communities, particularly in larger urban centres.

With increased movement between urban centres and rural areas, we would expect to see the potential for COVID-19 to affect more people in our rural and small urban areas. It is also important to know that health care services, though not strained at this time, could become overwhelmed with the arrival of many people to cottages who may be unknowingly incubating the virus as they arrive. Having a case of COVID-19 begin in a more remote location would make it more difficult for people to obtain the timely medical care that they would need. Cases of COVID-19 in addition to non-COVID illnesses or other injury could also further strain the local healthcare system. Local essential businesses may have longer waits to restock grocery and other supplies needed for their permanent residents.

For these reasons I ask that you inform your association members of my concerns by sharing this message with them and ask that they postpone going to their cottages, even for a day trip, until a later time when the leadership within the public health system communicates that the rate of COVID-19 transmission is truly under control and sufficiently low to not pose these hazards.

I understand that there are limited, essential reasons that may require someone to check on their property. I am also aware that despite my message to stay home, there will still be some people who will make the decision to go to their cottage. If that is what they choose to do despite the request to not do so, they need to ensure that they follow public health measures, including:

- purchasing food and medications in their own community before arriving at their cottage and limiting their visits to the local community for essential shopping only
- no gatherings of more than five people unless they are all from the same household
- physical distancing of at least 2 metres from other people
- staying at their cottage as much as possible
- practicing proper hand washing and cough hygiene, including frequent handwashing;
- self-isolating if they develop symptoms

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For more information on COVID-19:

- visit our website at www.hpph.ca/coronavirus
- call our Health Line at 1-888-221-2133 ext 3267.
- follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/HuronPerthPublicHealth/ or
Twitter: @HPPublicHealth

Please be safe and be well this spring and summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miriam Klassen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Miriam Klassen,
Medical Officer of Health,
Huron Perth Public Health