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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Lambton COVID-19 Update

Friday, March 13, 2020

Point Edward, ON - Lambton Public Health (LPH) is closely monitoring the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and providing direction locally based on new guidelines as they are received. **The COVID-19 outbreak level of risk for residents of Lambton County remains low.**

Updates related to sectors, settings and key stakeholders:

Municipalities

Municipalities should refer to their business continuity plans, and plan for staff absences related to both illness and social distance measures such as school closures. Municipalities planning large gatherings should suspend gatherings above 250 people. Gatherings of fewer numbers should be critically evaluated, and you can consult with public health related to your event as needed.

Businesses

We encourage business organizations and employers to review their business continuity plans, and to assess the ability for staff to work remotely or at home if needed.

Health Care Providers

Health care providers need to ensure that patients with urgent medical needs can be assessed. This can be in-person, by phone, or through some other virtual method. There are specific testing criteria for COVID-19, given that we are operating on the presumption that it is here and circulating, so the streamlined testing will maintain the capacity of the health system. There is a global shortage of critical supplies like masks, so it is possible that some health care providers may not be able to see patients with respiratory symptoms. The Ministry is working to obtain these supplies and connect them to local need.

School Closures

As you know, publicly funded schools will be closed for an additional 2 weeks after March break, in order to pre-empt transmission by returning travellers. In addition, all children who have been out of the country (including USA) within the last 14 days will be prevented from attending daycare or school until 14 days from their return, regardless of

their symptoms. I am extending the school closure recommendation to private schools, because social distancing only works if everyone does it at the same time.

Consequences of School Closures on Organizations

There may be significant consequences of school closures on your organizations, as parents and others are increasingly pulled into caring for their children who cannot attend school. Review your business continuity plans, implement as needed, and consider how remote work or work from home can be facilitated.

Daycares

Daycares are at this time allowed to remain open. That may change quickly. Daycares are asked to be vigilant about refusing any symptomatic child and about preventing children who have recently returned from any travel from attending for 14 days from their return. Until specific direction is given, I am also asking for daycares to automatically close if they have 10% absenteeism or greater, and to contact public health for further instructions.

Personal & Professional Travel Outside of Canada

The Chief Medical Officer of Health is asking everyone to avoid non-essential travel. Adults (over 16) who return from international travel, even across the border, are requested to self-monitor for respiratory symptoms for 14 days and self-isolate if they experience fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms. Children who return from international travel will not be allowed to attend daycare or school for 14 days, regardless of symptoms.

Large Gatherings

Mass gatherings above 250 people are suspended until further notice. Until further direction is given, gatherings of less than 250 should consider ways to keep people at least 1 m apart, ways to ensure hand hygiene, and ways to ensure no symptomatic people attend.

Access to More Information

Lambton Public Health is currently experiencing significant call volume on our phone lines. Please access our website LambtonPublicHealth.ca to learn more about call priorities and options to learn more about COVID-19.

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