Municipality Of Chatham-Kent

Community Human Services

Public Health Unit

Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Teresa Bendo, Director, Public Health

Date: March 6, 2020

Subject: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Status Report

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

In late December 2019, the World Health Organization was notified of several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, China, caused by a virus that had not been previously identified. In January 2020, Chinese officials confirmed that a new, novel coronavirus had been identified. Since that time, cases have continued to be reported within China and in other countries around the world.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). COVID-19 is a unique strain first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China that has not previously been known to infect humans. Symptoms of COVID-19 illness have ranged from mild cold-like symptoms to severe illness with fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia.

Comments

COVID-19 what is the current situation?

Chatham-Kent residents remain at **low** risk for COVID-19. As of March 6, 2020 CK has had no local cases. However, because respiratory illness can spread quickly, public health and local health care partners, as part of a province-wide system, are preparing for a global pandemic.

The Ministry of Health has added COVID-19 as a designated disease reportable under Ontario's public health legislation. Now, physicians, hospitals and other care facilities are required to report a suspected or confirmed case of the COVID-19 to their local Medical Officer of Health.

Surveillance studies have indicated that COVID-19 is not spreading in Ontario at this time. All cases can still be traced to a returned traveler from a "hot" area. Public Health Units conduct case and contact management for all probable, presumptive confirmed, and confirmed COVID-19 cases. CK Public Health would work closely with the Ministry of Health, and Public Health Ontario Laboratory in the management of the case and anyone who has come in contact with the patient to prevent and control further spread of the illness.

This work is all part of the routine public health follow–up of a case of an infectious disease. CK Public Health has taken lengths to ensure that there are professional staff trained to manage situations such as these as they arise. This is what we do.

What is CK Public Health doing?

CK Public Health is closely monitoring this global situation and working closely with local, provincial, and federal partners to manage and respond effectively.

Telephone services are staffed to answer questions from the public and partners between 8:30-4:30 pm Monday- Friday and hours will be extended as necessary.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada, along with Canadian public health experts, have produced a number of guidance documents for a number of health sectors: primary care, acute care, home and community care, long term care, paramedic services, laboratories, pharmacies and independent health facilities to protect patients and health care workers. In addition, the Public Health Agency of Canada has developed a COVID-19 guidance document for schools and childcare programs. This guidance document includes recommendations for school administrators, and provides information about psychosocial considerations for school communities.

CK Public Health continues to update www.ckpublichealth.com with guidance documents, answers to Frequently Asked Questions, status updates, and other information to support the public and Health Unit partners.

On March 2nd, the Government of Ontario announced an enhanced reporting structure to respond COVID-19. Going forward, a provincial Command Table will provide strategic direction to five regional Planning and Implementation Tables that correspond to the five new Ontario Health regions. Provincial areas of focus include developing strategies for: surveillance; laboratory testing; care and treatment; supplies and equipment; public health measures; and communications. Local planning efforts coordinated by CK Public Health will feed into this coordinated regional and provincial response structure.

How is CK Public Health preparing for what may come next?

In the event of a local outbreak, community collaboration will be integral to an effective response, and CK Public Health will continue to engage with community partners as the situation evolves.

CK Public Health is the coordinating agency under the Municipality's pandemic plan, but that responsibility is shared with the Municipality, and the health system, including Chatham-Kent Health Alliance (CKHA), as well as the Local Health Integration Network. CK Public Health will activate its emergency operations centre and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent will activate the Municipal Emergency Operation Centre if needed.

CK Public Health has an emergency response plan that outlines the organization's plan for organizing and deploying health unit staff and resources in the event of an emergency, and a specific pandemic plan that provides an overview of CK Public Health's response to an infectious disease emergency.

CK Public Health continues to work with its health care partners, particularly CKHA and Paramedic Services as per the pandemic plan in order to ensure screening and assessment centres are set up to provide fast access to assessment and screening and appropriate health care. CK Public Health is currently working with these partners to determine options for these centres to be ready to open when the need is there and coordinated with others in the province.

Finally, CK Public Health has a business continuity plan to ensure that essential public health services can be maintained in the event of any emergency.

How can you help CK Public Health?

In order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, everyone has a role to play.

Take care of yourself, your friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues to prevent the spread of infections.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough in your sleeve.
- Now and in any cold and flu season, stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.

Be a public health ambassador. Encourage others to do the same.

Like any other emergency, make a family plan. If COVID-19 becomes common in CK, you will want to have made plans about how you reduce your risk for infection. The Government of Canada's website can give you some emergency preparedness tips.

Where can I get reliable information?

CK Public Health also maintains a webpage with current information: https://ckphu.com/2020/01/novel-coronavirus-update/ . Follow CK Public Health on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. If you have specific questions not found on the website, call the Health Unit at 519.355.1071 x 1900.

Every weekday at 10:30 am and 5:30 pm ET the Province of Ontario's novel coronavirus web page is updated with the most up-to–date information, including the status of cases in Ontario.

The Government of Canada has a list of COVID-19 affected countries, all of which have an associated COVID-19 travel health notice. The list of affected countries and travel health notices is updated as required as the outbreak evolves.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

Prepared by: Reviewed by:

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Teresa Bendo, MBA   W. David Colby, MSc, MD, FRCPC
Director, Public Health   Medical Officer of Health

Reviewed by:

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April Rietdyk, RN, BScN, MHS, PHD PUBH
General Manager
Community Human Services

Attachments: None

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