

First Positive Screen for a Potential COVID-19 Variant of Concern Identified in Timiskaming District

February 6, 2021 - For immediate release

Dr. Glenn Corneil, acting Medical Officer of Health and CEO for the Timiskaming Health Unit (THU), is reporting that the THU has been notified that a confirmed COVID-19 test result has screened positive for a possible variant of concern (VOC). All positive results of COVID-19 with exposure associated to international travel are screened for variants of concern. Further testing is needed to confirm the screen and identify the variant, with the results expected in the next few days. The individual is currently self-isolating and, to date, no associated cases have been identified locally.

There are currently three different variants of concern that have been identified world-wide. The concern with these variants is that they are highly contagious, which means they spread more easily.

Dr. Corneil states, “The best way to prevent the transmission of any new variant of COVID-19 is to closely follow the public health measures that have proven to be effective. We urge every resident across the THU district to act as though exposure is both possible and probable every day, and in every community, regardless of case announcements.” He added, “Even though our present case count is low and our district has been doing very well in 2021, we cannot let our guard down as the presence of these variants are an increasing concern across the province. The local situation can change rapidly.”

THU reminds anyone who thinks they may have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who tested positive, to first self-isolate and call their local Assessment Centre or THU’s COVID line for assessment and to book an appointment to be swabbed.

District residents are reminded to:

- Continue practicing physical distancing
- Wear a mask or face covering in public indoor spaces
- Wash hands with soap and warm water or use alcohol based sanitizers and do not touch your face
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow
- Gatherings with people outside of your household are prohibited under lockdown
- Avoid non-essential travel within and outside of our district, especially to high transmission areas
- Stay home if unwell and contact your local Assessment Centre (AC) to schedule an appointment for testing
- Respect public health and any additional safety measures businesses have put in place
- Reach out to vulnerable people in your community who may need support

For more information on COVID-19, visit www.timiskaminghu.com and the [Ontario Coronavirus website](#). For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit THU’s [COVID-19 vaccine page](#).

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