

Media Release



COVID-19 South African variant confirmed in Timiskaming district

March 1, 2021 - For immediate release

Timiskaming Health Unit has received confirmation from Public Health Ontario that an individual in our service area has tested positive for the COVID-19 variant originally strain identified in South Africa (known as B.1.351 or 501Y.V2). This confirmation identifies the strain of the possible variant of concern (VOC) that was initially announced in our district on February 6.

The individual was identified as having an exposure to an outbreak in another region where many cases have screened positive for a variant of concern.

There are currently three different VOCs that have been identified in Ontario. The concern with these variants is that they are highly contagious, which means they spread more easily.

"The confirmation that one of the new COVID-19 variants of concern has been identified in our district is a reminder that we are all vulnerable. It is good news that there has not been any evidence of local spread of this VOC," said Dr. Glenn Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health and CEO for Timiskaming Health Unit. "Because variants are more infectious, they can quickly result in more cases, which means that more people could become seriously ill or lose their lives. 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 district to act as though exposure is both possible and probable every day, and in every community, regardless of our local case numbers."

District residents are reminded to follow public health measures:

- 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
- Avoid gatherings with people outside of your household
- Avoid non-essential travel outside of our district, especially to high transmission areas
- Stay home if you feel sick 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](http://OntarioCoronavirus.ca).

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