

January 8<sup>th</sup> 2021  
For Immediate Release

**COVID-19 A SERIOUS THREAT TO REGIONAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM;**

**STRESS ON LOCAL CAPACITY IS EVIDENT, RESIDENTS URGED TO STAY HOME, ADHERE TO LOCK DOWN REGULATIONS**

To the residents of Chatham-Kent:

The leaders of the Chatham-Kent Ontario Health Team (CKOHT) wish to emphasize to our community that our health care system is facing extremely serious strain and your urgent help is needed. The CKOHT is comprised of Health Service Providers across all sectors of our local healthcare system, including our hospital, family health teams, community health centres, community service organizations, and public health.

January has brought alarming changes to our COVID-19 status in Chatham-Kent;

- The rate of newly reported infections and percent positivity in CK has doubled. High case counts continue to be reported daily and over 120 new cases have been reported since Jan 1st. As transmission in the community increases, so does the risk for outbreaks in our local institutions and workplaces, and contact tracing becomes increasingly difficult.
- Our local hospital, CKHA, has accepted medicine patients from Erie Shores Health Care and Windsor Regional Hospital as caseloads increase to crisis levels in the Windsor-Essex area.
- The difficult decision was made to cancel all elective and non-urgent procedures at CKHA beginning Thursday, January 7, 2021 due to critical care needs in the hospital. An exception applies to cancer surgeries and procedures.

Our community, and our health care system, are at risk. Make no mistake – COVID-19 is real. The impact to our health care system is real.

Regardless of the myths spread about this virus online, one thing is certain: the higher the number of COVID-19 positive cases, the more likelihood our emergency and critical care services will be strained. We are also learning of the long-lasting impact that the virus has on common conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and those in poor cardiac health, respiratory conditions and anyone with immuno-compromised health. This virus is debilitating and serious.

We know many of you are tired of hearing about COVID-19 and the constant messaging – to wear a mask, to follow the lockdown protocols, and to limit visits outside of the home for essential trips like work and groceries. We all are feeling the disappointment of cancelled events, arts and recreation programming, and a new year that so far looks much the same as the old.

Our health care teams are tired too, and many are reaching the point of exhaustion. Our human resources are increasingly strained with every new case identified.

In Chatham-Kent, our partnerships are strong, and the collaborations through our CKOHT continue to help us support our community during this difficult time. But we are facing a wave larger than we have ever seen before, and we need you.

We are asking for your help. There are three things you can do to protect your community and health care system:

- 1) Understand the severity of the situation we are facing in our own community of Chatham-Kent - COVID-19 is real and it is in CK.
- 2) Respect the lockdown conditions and follow public health measures – limit contact as much as possible with those outside your household and only leave home for essential reasons.
- 3) If you feel sick or unwell, call your family doctor or primary care provider first. All organizations (Family Health Teams and Community Health Centres) remain open. If you do not have a primary care doctor you can connect with a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week through Telehealth by calling 1-866-797-0000. Do not go to the Emergency Room unless facing an acute healthcare emergency.
- 4) When visiting your doctor, the hospital, or receiving any form of health care, be completely honest about your symptoms when responding to COVID-19 screening questions. For those calling 911 for an ambulance, please be completely honest when being asked the COVID-19 screening questions. These questions help our teams assess the risk of COVID-19 exposure and any additional safety precautions needed to ensure the safety of paramedics and other healthcare workers. Regardless of your answers, a team will respond as quickly as possible.

The lives of every individual in our community are depending on you.

For more information regarding COVID-19 in Chatham-Kent please visit [www.ckphu.com/COVID19](http://www.ckphu.com/COVID19) or <https://www.facebook.com/CKPublicHealth>.

#StaystrongCK

Sincerely,

**The Members of the Chatham-Kent Ontario Health Team Steering Committee;**

Mary Ellen Parker, CEO, Alzheimer Society of Chatham Kent  
Alan Stevenson, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association Lambton-Kent  
Jessica Smith, Executive Director, Chatham-Kent Hospice/St. Andrew's Residence  
Sherri Saunders, Executive Director, Chatham-Kent Community Health Centre  
Heather Brooks, Executive Director, Chatham-Kent Family Health Team

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 Lori Marshall, President & CEO, Chatham-Kent Health Alliance  
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 Cathy Kelly, Vice President, Home & Community Care, Erie St. Clair Local Health  
 Integration Network, Home & Community Care  
 April Nelmes, Regional Director, Community Support Services, March of Dimes Canada  
 Donald MacLellan, General Manager, Chatham-Kent EMS  
 April Rietdyk, General Manager, Community Human Services/CEO, Chatham-Kent  
 Public Health, Municipality of Chatham-Kent  
 Denise Waddick, Executive Director, Thamesview Family Health Team  
 Kelly Griffiths, Executive Director, Tilbury District Family Health Team  
 Judy Gragtmans, Patient Advisor, Tilbury District Family Health Team  
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