



27 JAN 2020,

Dear Health Director:

We are writing to provide you with current information about the outbreak of respiratory illness in Wuhan, China that is caused by a new coronavirus. As you are probably aware, there are two probable cases in Toronto, in a couple who recently travelled from Wuhan, China. These people are isolated and being monitored. We want to assure you that we are aware of this situation and are following it closely. We are in ongoing contact with the Public Health Agency of Canada and receiving regular updates from them. We have provided up to date information to our nursing stations and health centres, and will continue to do so.

The risk to people in Canada who have not travelled to China is low.

We would like to answer some questions that we have received from First Nations community members.

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that come from animals but can cause respiratory illness in humans. Coronavirus infections are common and usually mild, for example they can cause the common cold. Symptoms are usually mild to moderate and can include fever, headache, cough, sore throat, and feeling unwell. More uncommonly, coronaviruses can also cause serious illness such as pneumonia, respiratory failure, kidney failure, or even death.

Why is this coronavirus “new”?

After several people in China became sick, all the tests for known viruses, such as influenza, were negative. This new virus had not been identified previously and therefore is ‘new’.

Who is at risk?

At this time it appears that people who have been in China, especially the city of Wuhan, are most at risk of being infected. People who are older (65 years) or who have heart or lung problems appear to be at risk of more severe disease. People in Canada who have not been travelling to China are not considered to be at risk.

How is the virus spread?

This virus, like other respiratory viruses, is probably spread when people sneeze or cough into their hands and transfer virus to surfaces like water taps, door handles, and table tops. When other people



touch these surfaces and then their nose or eyes, they become infected with the virus. It is not known if it can be spread through the air or through other ways.

Is there a vaccine?

There is no vaccine for this virus at this time.

How is the virus diagnosed?

If a person has been to China and then become sick, they can be tested for this virus. A health care provider can take a sample from the nose or throat, and then send it to a laboratory for testing.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific treatment for any coronavirus infection. Very ill people who need to be in hospital receive “supportive care”, which means treating the patient’s symptoms, such as giving fluids and oxygen until the patient’s immune system can remove the virus.

How can people prevent getting sick with this virus?

Like all respiratory infections, there are things that people can do to protect themselves and others. Washing your hands frequently is most important. When coughing or sneezing, do not sneeze or cough into your hands but into your sleeve. If you use a tissue, put it in the garbage after use and wash your hands afterward. If you are sick, stay at home and monitor your condition. There is no evidence that face masks prevent illness and they are not recommended at this time. Anyone with worsening symptoms of a respiratory infection of any kind should contact their health provider.

What is Indigenous Services Canada– Ontario Region doing?

Our communicable disease team has been closely monitoring the situation since learning of the discovery of the new virus and the illnesses in China.

We have provided information to nursing stations and health centres about the virus, and what to do if the providers suspect that someone could have this infection, even though it is not likely at this time. This includes reaching out to our communicable disease team for guidance on assessing patients and possible testing if the person has been to China.

We are receiving updates regularly from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Health Ontario, and our provincial public health units.



What is the Public Health Agency of Canada doing?

The Public Health Agency of Canada is in regular contact with the World Health Organization, and is actively assessing any possible risk to Canadians. They provide regular updates to the provinces and to Indigenous Services Canada.

They have also put in place additional measures at large airports in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver to remind travellers to inform Border Services Officers if they have respiratory symptoms, and have added an extra health screening question when travellers arrive.

Updated information is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Our healthcare professionals will continue to monitor this situation and provide updated information as it becomes available. In the meantime we encourage you to share this information with your community and review community preparedness plans as a proactive measure.

Sincerely,

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