

Coronavirus cases on the rise in Ontario, none locally thus far

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Ontario health officials have confirmed a total of 36 provincial cases of COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus, and 93 overall in Canada, with seven new cases being announced in British Columbia on Tuesday (March 10).

Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliot informed the public that the virus has not yet become a problem provincially, with the few cases identified being linked to those who have been infected through travel, or close contact with those who have recently travelled.

Since the virus was identified in January of this year, the outbreak has been rapidly escalating, but local residents are being assured that the risk for Ontario is still considered low.

Locally, 15 people have been tested at Headwaters Health Care Centre for COVID-19.

"We continue to update our signage, screening processes and have developed a Management of a Patient with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Policy and Procedure in alignment with resources from Public Health Ontario and Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health Unit. Following the case definition, we have screened and tested 15 people at Headwaters. The swabs are sent to Public Health Ontario Laboratory in Toronto," said Sandy Critchley, Director of Quality Improvement, Planning and Performance at Headwaters. "All persons under investigation, or tested at Headwaters, have returned to their residence with self-isolation guidance and follow up with the Public Health Unit."

All 15 residents tested negative for COVID-19.

"The Ministry of Health says at this time COVID-19 is not circulating locally, however given the global circumstances, the government of Ontario is actively working with health partners to plan for the potential of local spread," said Critchley. "As part of our preparedness activities locally, we are actively working with our partners in Dufferin County and in the community of Caledon to prepare for potential local spread of the illness."

The Government of Canada developed a new Cabinet committee on COVID-19 last week to prepare and protect Canadians against the outbreak.

"We take the international spread of COVID-19 seriously, and Canadians can be assured that their government and health officials are working tirelessly to keep them safe. This new committee will continue to monitor the health and economic impacts of the virus, and make sure our response takes all possible measures to prevent and limit the spread of the virus in Canada," said Justin Trudeau in a previous new release.

The government is working closely with health officials and partners to keep consistent updates, information, procedures and awareness for Canadian citizens, especially those who are recently travelling.

The government is requesting that citizens take precautions to prevent the spread of germs and bacteria by washing your hands often with soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, sneezing and coughing into sleeve, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, avoid contact with those who are sick and to stay home if you are sick.

Public Health says that anyone who has recently travelled and returned from international countries and has symptoms such as, respiratory symptoms, fever and/or cough, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties should immediately see a physician. They also highly suggest international travelers should avoid close contact with people who are sick, wash their hands, avoid farms or wild animals and cover mouth and nose to help stop the spread of infection.

For mor information about COVID-19, please visit Ontario.ca/coronavirus.