

November 23, 2022

To: Community Partners and Business Owners/Operators in Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts

RE: Strong Recommendation to Mask in all Indoor Public Settings and Layering Protections During the Fall Respiratory Season

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit's (Health Unit) region is experiencing double the number of emergency department visits for flu-like and respiratory illnesses, compared to the pre-pandemic three-year average. This is similar to what is being seen across the province and emphasizes the need for everyone to use layers of protection to help prevent the spread of these viruses. Across the province, COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are the viruses which are causing the majority of these hospital visits.

Influenza causes a wide spectrum of illness, ranging from seven to ten days with mild symptoms, to severe illness requiring hospitalization. Complications of the flu may include worsening of chronic health conditions, pneumonia, and respiratory failure. RSV is a virus that usually causes cold symptoms in children but can cause bronchiolitis - an infection of the tiny airways that lead to the lungs that cause wheezing and difficulty breathing. This infection is most serious for young babies. There are currently no vaccines available against this virus.

Flu-like illnesses can have other negative effects on not only those who are ill, but also their families and friends. This can include missed school, resulting in days off work for parents and caregivers, and possibly a short-term loss of income due to unpaid sick days.

To protect against the threat of infection and severe illness, I strongly recommend that organizations and individuals in the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit region promote using layers of protection against viral respiratory illness:

- Mask in indoor public settings, including workplaces
- Stay [up to date](#) with COVID-19 and influenza vaccines
- Screen for respiratory symptoms daily
- Stay home and stay away from others in your household if you are sick
- Always practice good hand hygiene and regularly clean high-touch surfaces. These measures are especially important for RSV and flu viruses.

..... page 2

As community organizations and leaders, I am asking you to please consider how you can support masking and these other important measures in your respective settings.

When we use multiple layers of protection, we lower the risk of illness for ourselves and those around us, especially the most vulnerable. For more information, visit our [website](#).

Sincerely,

Original Signed by Dr. J. Chirico

James Chirico, H.BSc., M.D., F.R.C.P.(C), MPH
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

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