Emergency Control Group Pleads for the Community’s Continued Caution as Ontario Eyes Their Next Stage of Reopening While Six Nations Stays in Stage 2

Six Nations of the Grand River’s Emergency Control Group is reminding the community of the increased risk COVID-19 poses to First Nations as Ontario sets to ease public health restrictions this weekend. Six Nations of the Grand River to remain in Stage 2.

“I want to remind Six Nations members of the unfair reality we find ourselves in as surrounding communities set to embrace the next stage of Ontario’s reopening plan,” says Chief Mark Hill. “The fact is that we, alongside all of our First Nations brothers and sisters, are at a much higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and of suffering from its sometimes deadly symptoms. A history of colonialism has created many inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and that includes resilience to viruses like COVID-19. It is with this in mind that Six Nations will remain in Stage 2 of our Recovery Plan.”

The ECG points to several factors that put First Nations and other minority communities at an increased risk of contracting, spreading, and suffering from the effects of viruses and infections, including:

- Overcrowded and multi-family homes that serve as optimal sites for the spread of germs and viruses;
- Limited access to clean water that is needed for maintaining health and keeping homes and bodies clean and disinfected;
- Limited access to quality and properly-funded healthcare;
- Food insecurity and a lack of access to the nutritious foods that create healthy bodies and immune systems able to fight viruses and illnesses, and;
- Higher rates of pre-existing illnesses that make people more susceptible to the threat of additional illnesses and infections.

The ECG says that although Ontario is entering the next phase of its reopening plan, Six Nations is still very much in the second phase of theirs.
Ongoing public health and safety measures currently in place in Six Nation’s second phase include:

- A limit of 10 people for outside gatherings;
- Practicing physical distancing in public places;
- Wearing a mask while in public spaces, especially in indoor settings and when physical distance cannot be maintained;
- Staying at home if feeling ill or experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms (cough, shortness of breath or fever), and;
- Keeping bodies and surroundings clean and disinfected, especially hands by disinfecting and/or washing them often and for at least 20 seconds.

Public health officials are also reminding community members of their responsibility when it comes to contact tracing, a tool that continues to prove extremely effective in finding and containing the COVID-19 virus. Contact tracing requires infected individuals to recall and list places they’ve been and who they were in close contact with. Contact tracing may need to go back 14 days in order to find the source of infection. The goal of contact tracing is to isolate and contain the spread of this virus So it is imperative that individuals recall as much information as they can and are honest in helping to find the source of infection.

“We have all made great sacrifices for the health and safety of our community over the past four months and we hope those sacrifices don’t go to waste because people aren’t continuing to do their fair share,” says Chief Hill. “As a community, we will not hesitate to return to increased measures to protect our community, especially the most vulnerable among us, including our elders and knowledge-keepers.”

If you or somebody you know is experiencing any symptoms, please contact the COVID-19 information and assessment centre at 226-446-9909 OR 1-855-977-7737 to arrange for a free test.

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Media Contact:
Six Nations of the Grand River Communications Officer
clickers@sixnations.ca | 519-445-2205 extension 3238
1695 Chiefswood Road, P.O. Box 500, Ohsweken Ontario N0A1M0