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MESSAGE TO PARENTS – 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Last week, the Ontario Ministry of Health shared news of three confirmed cases of the 2019 novel (new) Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in our province. City of Hamilton Public Health Services is working closely with the Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario, and local health care providers to monitor this situation and take actions, as appropriate at the local level.

It is important to note that **there are currently no reported cases in the City of Hamilton. The Public Health Agency of Canada has assessed the public health risk associated with this new Coronavirus as low for Canadians.**

The purpose of this letter is to share some commonly asked questions and answers regarding the new Coronavirus.

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that commonly cause mild to moderate respiratory symptoms in humans. Most people with common human coronavirus illness (i.e. the common cold) will recover on their own.

Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world and include a range of illnesses from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). They can cause mild, moderate, or severe respiratory illness in some people.

What Are the Symptoms of the 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms of the 2019-nCoV infection include: **fever, cough, and breathing difficulties**, very similar to influenza (flu) symptoms. The risk of severe disease may be higher in the elderly and in people with weakened immune systems.

What if I have questions about recent travelers or questions about traveling?

We are advising any one planning to travel abroad to visit the Government of Canada website for Travel Advice and Advisories at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>. Additionally, those returning from traveling abroad are receiving information about passive screening. If travelers are symptomatic with fever, cough or difficulty breathing upon return from travel abroad they are being asked to call 1-866-797-0000.

How can I protect myself and others?

The 2019-nCoV virus has been identified at the same time influenza (also known as ‘the flu’) and many other respiratory viruses are circulating in Ontario, which is common this time of year. The actions to protect yourself against common respiratory illness can also be used to help protect against coronaviruses, including 2019-nCoV.

Hamilton Public Health Services recommends people take these preventive actions to protect yourself and others from respiratory illness:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Stay home when you are sick;
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze with a tissue, immediately discard the tissue into a garbage container and wash your hands;
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth;
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces; and
- Get your flu shot, if you have not already done so.

Hamilton Public Health Services will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available via the City of Hamilton’s website. If you have any questions, please contact the Infectious Diseases Program directly by calling 905-546-2063.

Sincerely,



Connie DeBenedet
Manager, Infectious Disease Program
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