

# MEDIA RELEASE

## COVID-19 Vaccines in the PHU region

**For Immediate Release—Tuesday, January 26, 2021**

**Timmins, Ontario** — Dr. Lianne Catton, Medical Officer of Health for the Porcupine Health Unit (PHU), is confirming that the health unit has received its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines for the PHU region. “This is definitely welcome news, especially after the tragic outcomes experienced by our communities in recent days,” stated Dr. Catton.

In accordance with Phase 1 of the province’s COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan, the vaccines will be administered to long-term care, high-risk retirement, and First Nations elder care residents within the PHU region. These groups are at high risk of exposure, severe illness and outcomes and will get their vaccine as soon as possible.

“Everyone is a priority and will receive a vaccine if they are eligible and want one,” said Dr. Catton. “However, we will not be able to immunize everyone at the same time, and we will need to stay positive and be patient.”

The PHU has been working with long-term care homes, retirement homes and First Nation communities across the region to prepare for COVID-19 vaccinations. Local public health units, like the PHU will lead the COVID-19 Vaccination Program for their region, aligning with the province’s COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan. “The PHU COVID-19 vaccination playbook is currently being finalized and includes ongoing collaboration with partners across sectors and communities to support and implement this critical next step in the response to the pandemic,” said Dr. Catton. “All decisions made about distribution of the vaccine follow Ontario’s Ethical Framework for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution.”

“The vaccine is an additional measure to reduce the spread COVID-19 and protect our communities,” added Dr. Catton. “It is giving hope that we will see an end to the pandemic and be able to return to some normalcy.” However, even with the start of this positive step forward, everyone is reminded it is critical to stay home as much as possible and follow the public health measures that reduce the risk of spread.

The PHU has been working with the Weeneebayko and Area Health Authority (WAHA), ORNGE, the First Nation Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), First Nation communities and local partners to support Operation Remote Immunity in the James and Hudson Bay region and was pleased to provide vaccines to a group of elders and congregate living setting in Moosonee last week.

The Porcupine Health Unit is located in Northeastern Ontario, serving the entire Cochrane District and Hornepayne, in Algoma District. The main office is located in Timmins, Ontario, with branch offices in Cochrane, Hearst, Hornepayne, Iroquois Falls, Kapuskasing, Matheson, Moosonee and Smooth Rock Falls.



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