



Renfrew County and District Health Unit  
*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, 3:45 p.m., February 18, 2021)

### **Barry's Bay Area: COVID-19 Hotspot in Renfrew County and District**

Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the Barry's Bay area has had 27 cases of COVID-19 whereas the remainder of Renfrew County and District (RCD) has totalled only 47. This is 36% of all the cases, in an area with only 12% of the total population in RCD.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) advocated to the Government of Ontario to allow RCD to move back to the Green Category of the [COVID-19 Response Framework](#), along with only two other regions in the province. "This is a testimony to the hard work of the residents of RCD and their strict compliance with public health guidelines since the December 26<sup>th</sup> lockdown," states Dr. Robert Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health, RCDHU. "We highlighted that our cases dropped dramatically early in the new year, and that we could reopen the local economy without danger," continues Dr. Cushman.

"The exception is the Barry's Bay area which surprisingly has seen more COVID-19 cases in 2021, than all of last year. This is worrying," states Dr. Cushman. "While there is no obvious direct cause and effect link, and the spread has mostly been within families, we have to ask, why is this area not following the downward trend we see across the rest of RCD," continues Dr. Cushman.

Unfortunately, this area has also been the source of frequent complaints from local merchants about customers who do not comply with the mask/face covering requirements. "We have also heard about anti-mask demonstrations, and concerns about post-secondary students not complying," follows Dr. Cushman.

"RCD has been classified as a Green Zone for over a week now. Businesses are finally getting the chance to open again, to employ their workers, and to serve their customers delayed needs. The last thing we want to do is to jeopardize our status and clamp down yet again on the economy, or possibly implement more stringent rules in the neighbourhood of Barry's Bay compared to elsewhere in RCD," emphasizes Dr. Cushman.

"This is concerning as it will be a challenge with forecasts of a third wave driven by COVID-19 variants that are more infectious and spread quicker than the original strains of the virus. Constant attention needs to be paid to masking, distancing and proper hygiene. Moreover, what stands out amongst the latest cases is the number of contacts and the additional spread. COVID-19 is a very social virus, especially the new strains and it goes without saying

that we need strict adherence to our household and workplace contacts to limit the spread,” states Dr. Cushman.

“We are all in this together and I would urge everyone of us, and especially the folks living in the Barry's Bay area to be vigilant to protect themselves, others and the economy. As the old saying goes, “when the going gets tough, the tough gets going,” finishes Dr. Cushman.

For more information, visit RCDHU's website at <https://www.rcdhu.com/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-2/> or call 613-735-8654 or 1-800-267-1097.

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