

## COMMUNITY NOTICE

### COVID-19 Detected in First Wastewater Sample

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**January 23, 2021** – Earlier this week, we advised the community that we will be conducting COVID-19 testing at our wastewater treatment plants in Garden Village and Duchesnay in partnership with the University of Ottawa and Ontario First Nations Technical Services.

This free, weekly testing service provides an early indicator to identify and track if COVID-19 is present in the community (possibly days sooner than other methods, especially for asymptomatic individuals). More information is provided in the “Background” section on page 2.

#### Preliminary Results

Nipissing First Nation collected samples to test for COVID-19 at the Garden Village Wastewater Treatment Plant on Monday, January 18, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. No sampling has been conducted in Duchesnay. Samples were analyzed at the University of Ottawa and each sample was tested three times.

COVID-19 (SARS CoV2 viral RNA) was detected in the baseline samples. The next sampling is scheduled for Monday January 25, 2021 and the results will assess if the presence or amount of COVID-19 is increasing or decreasing.

#### What Does the Presence of COVID-19 in Wastewater Mean?

- Fecal matter with COVID-19 was shed into the system by at least one to two persons at residential units or NFN buildings connected to the Garden Village Waste Treatment Plant during the sampling time and date.
- **This is not a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 nor does it confirm that individuals in the community are infectious.** The waste matter is not confirmed to be infectious as the samples include virus that is potentially broken apart.
- Mass testing of the community is not warranted as there are no known confirmed cases of COVID-19 in NFN at this time.
- If you are concerned that you may have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to COVID-19, the public health advice is to get tested at an assessment centre. If you do not have symptoms and have not been exposed to COVID-19 testing is not recommended.
- Community members should continue to follow all public health measures, including: maintaining physical distance from anyone who doesn't live within your house, practicing good hand hygiene, wearing a face covering and following the stay-at-home order.

## **NFN Contacts**

If you have questions or concerns about this notice or COVID-19 testing at NFN wastewater treatment plants, contact Patrick Stevens, Director of Community Infrastructure at 705-498-2519 or [patrick@nfn.ca](mailto:patrick@nfn.ca).

If you are concerned you may have COVID-19 symptoms, please contact Carole Lafantaisie, Community Health Nurse at (705) 840-8830 or [chn@nfn.ca](mailto:chn@nfn.ca) or Misty Arbour, Maternal Child Health Nurse at (705) 498-2137 or [mistya@nfn.ca](mailto:mistya@nfn.ca).

## **COVID-19 Assessment Centres**

- To book an appointment at the North Bay COVID-19 Assessment Centre call: (705) 474-8600 ext. 4110.
- To book an appointment at the West Nipissing COVID-19 Assessment Centre call: (705) 580-2186 between 10am and 4pm from Monday to Friday  
*Please note: you cannot leave a message.*

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Early COVID-19 Detection**

- It is known that a significant proportion of people with active COVID-19 infections shed the coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) in their stool, sometimes even before their symptoms start. Every time an individual with COVID-19 goes to the bathroom, they flush the virus into the wastewater system.
- We are testing our Sewage Collection System where anyone connected to our system can contribute including those who may not even know they are infected.
- We will be taking a total of four samples a week (two from each community per week).
- As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, additional means of testing for COVID-19 in the community can help determine our best collective response.
- The risk of infection for Wastewater Treatment Operators is low and full PPE protocols have been in place for over 10 months to minimize any risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- The limitations of the weekly testing means that the daily positive test numbers identified are partial views of COVID-19 activity in the community, however the benefit is that it may identify asymptomatic cases and provide early warnings to the community.