



Office of the Mayor

April 17, 2020

Sent Via email: mustafa.hirji@niagararegion.ca

Dr. M. Mustafa Hirji, MD, MPH, FRCPC,
Medical Officer of Health and Acting Commissioner of Public Health
Niagara Regional Public Health
Sir Isaac Brock Way, Campbell East
Thorold, ON L2V9A2

Dear Dr. Hirji:

Re: COVID-19 Data

For some time now, I have been concerned about the amount of data regarding COVID-19 made available on the Niagara Region Public Health web site. While I appreciate that additional data have recently been included, what the residents of Niagara have access to is significantly less than what residents in other parts of Ontario are privy to.

For example, the Public Health web sites of Waterloo and Windsor-Essex provide statistics with respect to total tests conducted, pending tests, epidemic curve of cumulative cases, character of cases and specifics regarding long term care and retirement residence cases. I am aware that other Public Health agencies are providing similar information to the public.

The residents of Niagara have no knowledge of how many tests have been conducted in Niagara, hence no understanding of the significance of data relative to the number of cases and deaths in Niagara. They have no knowledge of how many deaths have occurred in hospitals or in long term care homes and retirement residences or elsewhere. More importantly, they have no appreciation of what is occurring in our long term care homes and retirement residences as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. How many cases/deaths have occurred? How much testing is being done, of residents and staff? What proactive steps are being taken by Public Health to manage the situation?

There are three municipalities in Niagara that border the United States. Essential workers travel across the border on a daily basis, not to mention the seasonal home owners who also cross whether authorized to do so or not. Are these travellers having any impact on the incidence of COVID-19 in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara on the Lake, and other communities in Niagara, particularly Port Colborne and Wainfleet? Is any testing of them being done?

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Some other Public Health agencies are providing comparison statistics with other jurisdictions. This type of information provides context. The recent media release by Public Health expressed optimism in the effort to contain the virus and flatten the curve. While that optimism may be justified, there is no data provided that would support this.

The residents are looking to Public Health for accurate, meaningful information delivered in a transparent fashion. The messages delivered by elected officials to encourage residents to stay at home, maintain social distance, wash your hands frequently rely on the credibility of the science-based information disseminated by Public Health. The greater that information, the greater the likelihood that the public will comply with those messages.

When can the residents of Niagara expect to receive more detailed information, in line with other areas of the province, with respect to how we are fairing in the battle against COVID-19? Each day that passes is a lost opportunity for Public Health to inform those relying on you in these uncertain, stressful times. I look forward to your prompt response, for which I thank you.

Yours very truly,



Wayne H. Redekop
Mayor

WHR:dlk

c.c. sent via email:

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