

To: KCA Members / Cottagers

March 31, 2020

Re: URGENT MESSAGE

I am communicating the attached Urgent Message from Township of Madawaska Valley – Mayor Kim Love, as well as an Elert from the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association regarding the impact of COVID-19 on rural/cottage communities and consideration to be taken by seasonal residents before making a decision to shelter at the cottage.

The capacity of health facilities, essential services and supply chains is already strained. Let's not add unnecessarily to the challenges facing the local service and care providers, as well as the permanent residents of the community. To the extent possible, reconsider the cottage visit to a later date when the virus eases, and we have come through this together.

Stay safe – Be well

Sophia Sudnikowicz

President
Kaszuby Cottagers Association

Dear Madawaska Valley residents, businesses and community,

Last week the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) confirmed the first laboratory-tested positive case of COVID-19 in a Renfrew County resident who has been hospitalized at Pembroke Regional Hospital. The RCDHU press release quoted the Acting Medical Officer of Health for our area:

“We know that confirmed cases represent only a fraction of disease activity in the community. For every 1 confirmed case there are probably 10 cases out in the community and quite possibly 100. The message is clear. COVID-19 is in Eastern Ontario and in Renfrew County,” says Dr. Robert Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health, Renfrew County and District Health Unit.

COVID-19 is in Renfrew County.

THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

Returning Snow Birds and all travellers must go straight home and stay home alone for 14 days. Not feeling sick today, does not mean you don't have or carry COVID-19. Your family, friends and community are depending on you to help flatten the curve by stopping the spread of COVID-19.

Seasonal residents and cottagers, please carefully consider the good advice provided by the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association before making a decision to shelter at the cottage. All non-essential businesses in Madawaska Valley are closed. Essential businesses and services are stressed by supply shortages and reduced capacity due to physical distancing and self-isolating. There are not enough Family Doctors for the year-round population and our rural healthcare system has no extra COVID-19 capacity. Life has changed here just as much as it has back home.

During this pandemic, changes have been made so the municipality can continue serving our community and protect the health of our employees and the public. The Municipal office is closed to the public but staff are working and available by phone or email. We are getting ready to hold electronic Council meetings that will be available to the public online. Council has approved a COVID-19 Response Plan, and the Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) and the CEMC alternate are participating in conference calls with the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, the County of Renfrew and Public Health. They are also monitoring the spring freshet and the municipality is prepared should spring flooding become an issue.

Council would like to thank everyone who provides essential services to our community. If you are not one of these workers - stay at home. If you must get food or pick up a prescription, please respect others and follow the physical distancing directions provided in local businesses. Remember to wash your hands regularly. If anyone in your household has symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19, stay home and ask for help. Although we need to stay apart, we are all in this together. Cooperation, compassion and helping others are ways we can keep everyone in our community healthy and strong.

Mayor Kim Love

Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations

(FOCA Elert - March 2020)

Sheltering at the cottage: an emerging discussion

Safety First

If you are a snowbird, or otherwise returning from travel abroad, Health Canada expects you to self-isolate for 14 days. Information is available online here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>.

What if you own property in two places in Ontario, and want to relocate from one to the other, such as: shelter in place at your cottage?

FOCA has heard from many members, partners, and municipal contacts over the past days about this issue. Many are concerned that any transiting increases the chance for spread of illness.

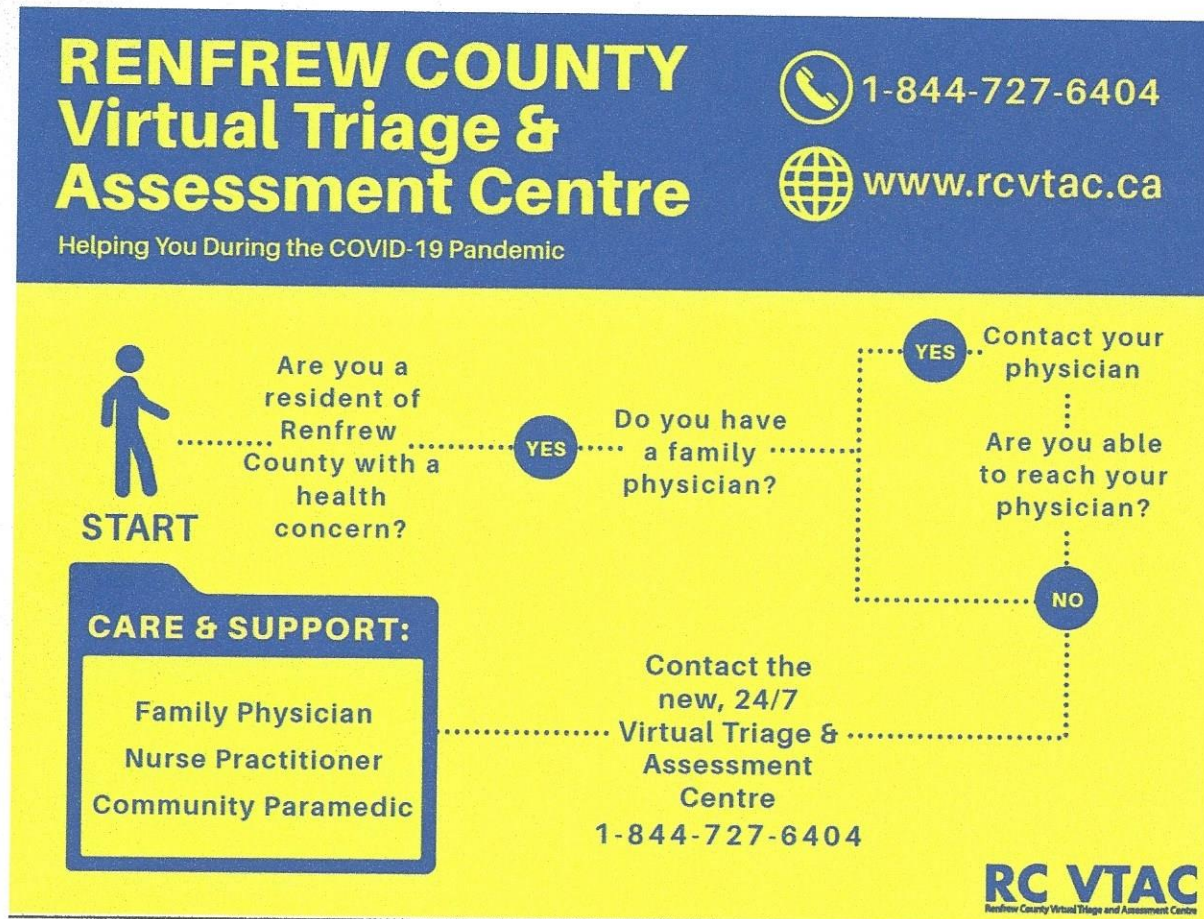
FOCA reminds members that our rural communities have reduced capacity to accommodate sudden changes in supply demands; put another way, cottage country isn't expecting you yet. Most of us wouldn't ordinarily open the cottage until nearer to the May long weekend. As we already know from our local grocery experiences, parts of the supply chain are under strain. Additionally, rural hospitals have limited capacity, and you should consider where your health needs can best be met, in an emergency situation.

If you do relocate to your waterfront residence (or are there already), FOCA suggests the following:

- Connect with your lake association on social media (find many connections via FOCA's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/foca.on.ca>). As always, these are the people who know your waterfront area best!
- Provision yourself for several weeks (with food, drinks, gas, hardware supplies, prescriptions) before leaving your off-season community, so that you will not need to make stops along the way. This is not the time for our usual credo to "buy local" in cottage country. As you would do anywhere at this time, should you urgently need anything from a retailer or pharmacy, you should call ahead to see if there are options for safe pickup or delivery.
- Continue to follow all the principles of social distancing at the cottage! Although cottage country is usually the place for relaxed rules, that cannot be the case anywhere for the foreseeable future. Cottages are often the gathering places for multiple households in an extended family; for now, and possibly for some time to come, that could put everyone at risk.
- Develop an exit plan with immediate family, in case you develop any indications of illness while at your waterfront property.
- As the clock slows down on our usually-hectic schedules, use this time to enjoy nature, cook, read, sing, dance, nap, and dream about dock-jumping time to come.

FOCA encourages our members and media partners to share these tips widely.

How to Access Healthcare Services:



- The Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre is a new pandemic healthcare service to reduce the demand on Emergency Departments and provide Renfrew County residents, who do not have a family physician or cannot access their family physician, with the appropriate level of care when they have any health concern (including concerns related to COVID-19).
- Any Renfrew County resident who has a health concern (including concerns related to COVID-19) and does not have a family physician or cannot access their family physician can access care and support through the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre.
- The RCVTAC is a virtual solution that allows physicians, nurse practitioners and/or community paramedics to assess and manage health concerns in multiple ways depending on a person's needs. This includes:
 - Phone appointments
 - Video appointments
 - In-home assessments and diagnostic testing by community paramedics

- Remote monitoring and alerting and if necessary, escalation to a designated team of physicians and allied health professionals for the management of patients with COVID-19
- Referral to other services including mental health support
- Residents can access the Centre by calling 1-844-727-6404. This service is covered by OHIP with a valid health card.