



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Ontario Health Team of Northumberland seeking community volunteers to produce cloth masks to help preserve local use of medical grade surgical masks**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY – Monday, June 1, 2020** – With COVID-19 restrictions beginning to lift in Ontario, and federal and provincial public health authorities now recommending cloth face coverings for all as an additional means of minimizing the spread of infection when physical distancing is not possible, local Ontario Health Team of Northumberland partners are calling on area volunteers to help them ensure their patients and clients have a ready supply.

At their weekly meeting May 28, the OHT-N partners approved a plan to collect, clean, package and distribute hand-made cloth masks to their patients and clients, as donations permit, with easy to use instructions on how to wear them and care for them properly.

“Two observations have motivated us to take this step together at this time,” said Linda Davis, spokesperson for the OHT-N. “First, many local residents told us at and after our [recent COVID-19 Virtual Forum](#) that they would like a mask to wear when they visit the grocery store or pharmacy, but they are having trouble finding one. Second, as OHT-N members prepare to ramp up their services, many—including the Northumberland Family Health Team, Community Health Centres of Northumberland and Rebound Child and Youth Services to name a few—will be asking their patients and clients to wear a mask when they come to their appointment. By working together, we hope to preserve precious medical grade personal protective equipment (PPE) for those delivering direct patient care by helping to get cloth mask alternatives into the hands of our patients and clients. We also see an opportunity to increase education on how to safely ‘don and doff’ (put on and take off) a face mask, as it may increase risk if used incorrectly.”

The OHT-N partners have a ready-made distribution network to help get more cloth masks in circulation among their Northumberland patients and clients quickly. The intent is that those who receive one will keep it and reuse it in the community and for subsequent appointments. They are calling today for volunteers to help by sewing masks to the specifications below, and dropping off donations of completed masks at one of two collection points below. If transportation is a challenge, donated masks may be mailed in as well.

#### **Is there a specific design to follow when making a cloth mask?**

The Centre for Disease Control in the U.S has several different patterns to follow. [Download instructions here](#), including advice on preferred materials. Elastic is strongly recommended rather than ties for securing the masks as ties have been found to be difficult for many wearers to put on and take off.

#### **How can I drop off my masks?**

Please put your sewn masks in a plastic bag with your contact information (name, address, email address and phone number). This contact information will give us the opportunity to thank you. Masks may be dropped off to the following locations, as noted:

- CAMPBELLFORD – Community Living Campbellford – 65 Bridge Street East (please call in advance, as hours are intermittent - 705.653.1821, ext 203)
- COBOURG - Northumberland Hills Hospital’s main entrance, 1000 DePalma Drive – between 8 AM and 8 PM daily

Masks may also be mailed to the OHT-N care of:

Northumberland Hills Hospital (attention: Charity Meiklejohn)  
1000 DePalma Drive  
Cobourg, ON K9A 5W6

### **When will these masks be available, and how can I get one?**

Distribution will start as soon as supplies permit, beginning with distribution from OHT-N primary care partners and, as time and hours of operation permit, eventually extending to all OHT-N partners. See [the OHT-N website](#) for a listing of partners, and future updates on mask availability.

Helping to build local access to cloth face masks as a means of minimizing the spread of COVID-19 is consistent with the objectives of the OHT-N, which are to:

- Improve patient and caregiver experience
- Improve health outcomes
- Improve provider work life experience
- Improve value to the community

“The OHT-N partners thank all those able to put their talents to work for the good of Northumberland County,” said Linda Davis. “County residents have worked very effectively together with area health and social care organizations to minimize the impact of COVID-19. The number of confirmed positive cases in our region remains very low and we have a shared responsibility to sustain this. This mask campaign is a further step we can take together as partners to keep our community safe.”

For information on how to put on, remove and clean a non-medical face mask, see the [Health Canada recommendations here](#).

### **About the OHT-N**

Drawing on a strong history of collaboration, patients, caregivers, health and social care providers from across Northumberland County are working together to improve patient and caregiver experience of health care in our community, as well as provider work-life experience, through the Ontario Health Team (OHT) model. On December 6, 2019, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott visited the Colborne Emergency Services Base [to announce the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland \(OHT-N\) as one of the first 24 OHT candidates in the province](#). The OHT-N is now moving forward with implementing this new model of organizing and delivering health care, better connecting local patients and health care providers in order to improve patient outcomes. COVID-19 has provided an unexpected opportunity to capitalize on these partnerships. For more information please visit the OHT-N website,

[ohtnorthumberland.ca](http://ohtnorthumberland.ca), email the team care of [info@ohtnorthumberland.ca](mailto:info@ohtnorthumberland.ca) or reach out by phone care of the contacts below.

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