Interior Health declares COVID-19 cluster in the Fernie region

FERNIE – Interior Health has declared a COVID-19 cluster in the Fernie region and urges all residents to maintain their efforts to prevent community transmission of COVID-19.

"This week, contact tracing confirms new cases of COVID-19 where people are reporting higher numbers of close contacts which contributes to increased community spread and heightened concern," said Dr. Albert De Villiers, Interior Health chief medical health officer. "Declaring this cluster today allows us to continue working together in Fernie while strengthening our collective response."

Clusters are declared when problematic COVID-19 transmission is occurring throughout a community.

There is no single location or event tied to the majority of cases; they primarily appear to be associated with local social gatherings. These events are a significant concern and all residents are reminded to refrain from contact outside your immediate household and seek COVID-19 testing at the first sign of symptoms.

Since January 1, 2021, a total of 81 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in this region and 63 cases are currently active.

"I would like to thank the dedicated physicians and staff in the region who are working hard to support their patients and stop the spread of COVID-19," said Susan Brown, Interior Health president and CEO. "We call on everyone in the community to focus on following all the public health measures that help keep ourselves and loved ones safe."

Interior Health is grateful to local elected officials, businesses and community leaders for their support as we remind everyone to follow precautions and not stigmatize or judge others who seek testing or test positive for COVID-19.

The next update on this cluster will be Friday, Jan. 29.

Everyone in all communities should remain vigilant in following COVID-19 precautions:

- Keep to your household bubbles and avoid social gatherings.
- Avoid all non-essential travel; stick to your local ski hill and local activities.
- Stay home when you are sick and get tested if you have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- Practise physical distancing and use a mask if you cannot.
- Wash your hands often.

Booking a COVID-19 test:
Testing is available in the Elk Valley by appointment only through the Sparwood Health Centre. Testing is not recommended if you do not have symptoms.

Online: You can book an appointment online through the COVID-19 Test Booking Form:
https://interiorhealthcovid.secureform.ca/index.php

By phone: Call the COVID-19 Test Booking Line at 1-877-740-7747 for assistance with booking your test.

Symptoms:

Testing is recommended **if you have any ONE of the following symptoms** more strongly associated with COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough*
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing

 Either new onset or worsening/exacerbation of chronic cough.

Testing is also recommended **if you have TWO or more** of the following general symptoms that **persist after 24 hours**, and are not related to any other pre-existing conditions:

- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

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