

**Messages from Kit Cheng, Council Commissioner**  
**in response to 'Advice Request - new coronavirus in Toronto'**  
**Jan 27, 2020**

Hi Daniel and Group Commissioners,

Thank you for sharing your concerns with us.

I have been in conversation with Safe Scouting this morning - they will meet "to discuss our concerns and possible messaging to our membership that may be necessary". We will provide updates as soon as it becomes available.

In the meanwhile, I will ask everyone to:

- Be reassured safety is Scouts Canada's top priorities
- Continue to take advice and recommendations only from official and reputation sources - such as [York Region Public Health](#), [Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health](#), [www.york.ca/coronavirus](http://www.york.ca/coronavirus), [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus), and [www.canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)
- At this time, the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and York Region Public Health have advised that additional protocols at schools are not necessary. The risk to Ontarians remains low. We must work together to ensure children are feeling safe and that misinformation is not being spread that elevates concern ([source](#))

In the Scouting context, at this moment - here are my recommendations to all Groups as we wait for further guidance:

- Continue all Scouting activities where practical and safe to do so - do exercise the same level of caution as peak flu seasons. Groups can contact Safe Scouting for advice when in doubt.
- Encourage healthy practices as recommended by Health Authorities (e.g., wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap & water, cover your mouth & nose when you cough or sneeze, stay home if you or your family members are ill)
- If the member is asked to stay home by their school or their workplace - then they should stay home and not come to Scouting activities.
- Be firm with safety - but don't make unnecessary rules that will cause greater harm. For example, it is appropriate to enforce frequent hand-washing. However, it is not appropriate to make our members wear medical masks to Scouting activities - if the member is ill - they're to stay home. As per Public Health's authority's recommendation - "Public health agencies are not recommending the wearing of medical masks, and doing so heightens anxiety, and may, in fact, increase risk of infection in your child") ([source](#))

- Same rules should apply to adults and youths
- Group Commissioners - please become knowledgeable about the activities your sections will be undertaking in the next few weeks (no reporting required - it's just for your information in case you need to act on short notice)
- Group Commissioners & Scouters - please regularly check emails for possible updates as the situation continues to develop. Be prepared to take action on short notice. The above recommendations are based on what we know today - Safe Scouting and the government will update guidance and instructions as the situation continues to develop.

One thing I will ask all Group Commissioners to do **immediately** is to share the above information with your Section Scouters. It's crucial that we, as Scouters, stay calm but be knowledgeable about the situation - and act on facts and official advice as necessary.

Please feel free to reach out to your Group's Relationship Manager or Safe Scouting for support and advice - so that we can continue to stay safe and have fun.

Thank you,

Kit Cheng  
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