



# Media Release

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May 28, 2020

## Medical Officer of Health Rescinding Order for Beach Closures in Grey Bruce

The Grey Bruce Health Unit Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Ian Arra, is rescinding the Order of May 14, 2020 that required municipalities to close all beaches in Grey and Bruce Counties. This Order is effective today, Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 12:00 p.m.

The risk of COVID-19 transmission and community spread remains. To address this risk each municipality can maintain its beach closure based on local need.

The intent of the May 14 Order was to send a message provincially that Grey and Bruce Counties are not open for tourism yet. This would deter one-day visitors and prevent mass gatherings on beaches. The ultimate goal is to suppress community transmission of Covid-19 for all residents in Grey and Bruce and protect the most vulnerable of us, seniors and individuals with comorbidities who would suffer severe disease.

The Medical Officer of Health can and will make Orders based on scientific and epidemiological information and data, it may exercise a discretion to refrain from enforcement of its Orders in appropriate circumstances. The authority of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* is purposely robust and can supersede provincial directives to suit local needs in some cases. To that end, we conveyed to all Mayors of Bruce and Grey Counties that it would be at the discretion of each municipality to keep its boat launches, marinas and trails along the beach closed, or open to some or all people. As a matter of fact, this Order was requested and/or welcomed by all municipalities as expressed by their Mayors. The Order was devised to be a legal vehicle that could be utilized by municipalities as they see fit, based on their local need, until each municipality passes its own by-law, if needed.

The Medical Officer of Health is not required by law to consult with or take permission from affected municipalities, especially in emergencies. However, as the better practice of the specialty of Public Health and Preventive Medicine dictates, before the Order's making we consulted and maintained robust communication, over 7 days, with all relevant stakeholders including all Grey County and Bruce County Mayors, Municipal CAOs, Police Chiefs, Prosecutor, Fire Chiefs, Indigenous Chiefs, the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, and select neighbouring Medical Officers of Health.

A healthier future for all.

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The information on potential mass gatherings on beaches and subsequently the need for an Order were brought to our attention by Mayors of Grey and Bruce Counties. It was championed by Mayors who have health and safety as their focus.

The original plan was to rescind the May 14 Order after two weeks, provided the epidemiological data stays constant. Because the data has been constant, we are rescinding the Order for all affected municipalities so that individual by-laws may be considered.

Risk of COVID-19 spread related to day-use beaches in any municipality has the potential to increase the prevalence of the disease in the wider health unit; this is especially so during popular tourist gathering times, like holiday weekends. We encourage all municipalities, to consider adoption of such by-law.

**For More Information:**

Dr. Ian Arra

Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

To arrange to speak with Dr. Arra, please contact Drew Ferguson at:

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