

COVID-19 UK variant confirmed in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph region

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health says three additional Guelph residents are now suspected to have contracted the B.1.1.7 (UK) variant of COVID-19, after further investigation into the first confirmed case in the region.

Wellington-Dufferin Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) announced last Thursday (Feb. 11) that a previously-resolved positive case of COVID-19 in the region had been detected by Public Health Ontario (PHO) as a case of the COVID-19 UK variant.

The individual, a resident of Guelph, tested positive for the virus on Jan. 13 and the case was considered resolved on Jan. 21. The case was handled by the regions Public Health unit as a non-variant case.

Public Health in a press release said the case was flagged for genetic sequencing by PHO as a result of travel outside of Canada which included contact with individuals from the UK.

Danny Williamson, spokesperson for Public Health, provided an update on Friday (Feb. 12) which revealed five individuals, four from Guelph and one from Toronto, had travelled outside of Canada together.

Public Health says the initial case, a resident of WDG, contracted the virus and completed their self-isolation outside of Canada while the four additional individuals tested positive or were suspected positive and completed their self-isolation when they returned to Canada.

‘We are fortunate in this instance,’ said Dr. Nicola Mercer Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDG Public Health. ‘Public Health acts quickly to contact all positive cases of COVID-19 in the region and ensure they self-isolate. Because this individual followed public health guidance, the risk to the community was limited.’

With the confirmation of a variant case in the health region, Public Health has established a process to address variant cases aggressively to contain spread.

Public Health has now lowered the criteria for what is considered a ‘high risk’ interaction, as part of their aggressive approach to mitigating the spread of variant cases.

Further investigation into the positive variant cases is still ongoing.

‘No action is required by members of the public with respect to this case, but the public should be aware that gathering with others for even small amounts of time puts you at risk of acquiring a COVID-19 variant.’