MEDIA RELEASE

First case of COVID-19 reported in the Porcupine Health Unit area

For Immediate Release —March 19, 2020

Timmins, Ontario —Today, Dr. Lianne Catton, Medical Officer of Health, Porcupine Health Unit (PHU), confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the PHU region.

A male in their 50s returned to Timmins after recent international travel. He developed respiratory symptoms and notified the Porcupine Health Unit (PHU) on March 17, 2020. PHU facilitated testing in the individual's home by the Cochrane District Emergency Medical Services (EMS) paramedicine program the same day.

EMS staff took all necessary infection prevention and control precautions. Following testing, the patient has remained in self isolation at home, following public health guidance and monitoring. Dr. Catton said, "The PHU continues to work closely with local, regional and provincial partners to monitor and detect any cases of COVID-19 in the community. We thank those partners for their ongoing cooperation and support."

While not unexpected, this confirmed case reinforces the need for all residents to follow public health recommendations. Social distancing – avoiding crowds and close contact with those outside of your immediate family, as well as staying home as much as possible are important measures for all – even if you feel well. Dr. Catton says, "Every community member plays an essential role in reducing the spread and impact of COVID-19 in the PHU area and protecting those at greater risk for this infection."

At this time, all international travellers are advised to self isolate for 14 days upon return to Canada. If any symptoms occur, please use the online assessment tool and contact the Porcupine Health Unit at 705-267-1181, extension 2919, Toll free: 1-800-461-1818, extension 2919.

To reduce the spread of viruses including the flu and the COVID-19 the PHU recommends that you:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you have just cleaned your hands
- Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue or into your arm, not your hand

- Stay home if you are sick

- Practice social distancing by avoiding close contact with people outside your immediate families. This means staying 2 metres apart from others while at work, and while running errands or attending appointments in the community.

The PHU is actively monitoring the situation and will continue to provide updates to the public.

The Porcupine Health Unit is located in Northeastern Ontario, serving the entire Cochrane District and Hornepayne, in Algoma District. The main office is located in Timmins, Ontario, with branch offices in Cochrane, Hearst, Hornepayne, Iroquois Falls, Kapuskasing, Matheson, Moosonee and Smooth Rock Falls.

For further information, please contact:

Gary Schelling
Communications Specialist
Porcupine Health Unit
(705) 267-1181 ext. 2413
gary.schelling@porcupinehu.on.ca