



Media Release

Town of Midland on the front lines of Wastewater Surveillance during COVID-19 Pandemic

February 10, 2021 –The Town of Midland has joined the Ontario’s Wastewater Surveillance Initiative for COVID-19. The province is investing \$12 million in the development of a province-wide COVID-19 wastewater surveillance network to track COVID-19 in communities across the province. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) selected the Town of Midland to be part of the Wastewater Surveillance Initiative with sampling and analysis beginning in February 2021.

Tracking the number of people who test positive for COVID-19 is one way to look at the overall level of COVID-19 activity in a community; however, not everyone with COVID-19 has symptoms or is tested, and waiting for test results takes time.

Studies have shown that a significant proportion of people with active COVID-19 infections shed the virus in their stool, sometimes even before symptoms start. Midland’s Wastewater Treatment Facility collects and treats wastewater from across the municipality, which allows for centralized measuring of the level of the COVID-19 genetic material (known as RNA) present in the wastewater. The testing captures both asymptomatic and symptomatic people. This data is another tool that can help shed light on whether the number of infected people in Midland is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same.

The Town of Midland will send weekly samples to the Ontario Technology University in Durham Region, where samples will be tested and results uploaded to a repository where municipalities, health units, and the provincial and federal governments can review the results and plan the appropriate response in those communities.

Locally, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit will use data from the Wastewater Surveillance Initiative to better determine the impact of COVID-19 in Midland, and the response needed.

In addition, in May 2020, the Town of Midland’s Water & Wastewater team began working with the COVID-19 Wastewater Consortium of Ontario (CWCO), a McMaster University initiative whose main goal is to pool resources in an effort to assess current situations, build capacity, and identify cost-effective, science-based solutions for municipal infrastructure.

The Town of Midland collected 11 weeks of wastewater samples during the end of wave one of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario to the beginning of wave two, in support of the CWCO’s COVID-19 wastewater tracking initiative.

“Wastewater surveillance provides an additional tool that Public Health can employ in conjunction with other sources of information, in effectively understanding and responding to COVID-19 within communities,” says Dr. Zobia Jawed, Project Lead, CWCO initiative.

“Our team was excited to go above and beyond in support of both the Ontario Wastewater Surveillance Initiative and the CWCO initiative,” said Andy Campbell, Executive Director of Environment & Infrastructure. “Throughout the past 9 months our team has become technical experts in testing and sampling, and we look forward to supporting both initiatives to help identify more effective ways of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The Town of Midland will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and provide updates on our website at Midland.ca/COVID-19, and we encourage residents to follow our social media channels for updates as well, [@MidlandON](https://twitter.com/MidlandON) on Twitter, and [@townofmidland](https://facebook.com/townofmidland) on Facebook.

For more information on the state of COVID-19 in our area, please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 or visit their website at simcoemuskokahealth.org.



For media enquiries, please contact:

Randy Fee | Communications & Marketing Coordinator
Town of Midland | 575 Dominion Avenue, Midland, ON L4R 1R2
705-526-4275 ext.2264 | rfee@midland.ca | Midland.ca | Engagingmidland.ca