

COVID-19 vaccinations underway in South Algonquin

By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In a press release issued on March 22, the Renfrew County and District public health gave an update on its vaccine rollout throughout the county, including South Algonquin Township. People aged 80 years and over are currently being vaccinated and those 75 years to 79 years of age are now eligible to register for the vaccine, and can do so at www.rcdhu.com. Jim Etmanski, the executive director of the South Algonquin Family Health Team, says that South Algonquin has been keeping in line with the Health Unit's roll out of the vaccine for their various eligible populations.

Currently, those people who are eligible to get the vaccine are 80 years of age or older, all seniors in congregate care residences, long term care and retirement home essential caregivers, Indigenous residents (on or off reserve) who are 18 years of age or older, all health care workers and anybody receiving chronic home care that has been identified by home health care organizations.

People who are 75 years to 79 years old are now eligible to register for their vaccines and book an appointment at a later date. If extra doses are available after the first group are vaccinated, they may be able to book an appointment to get their shot earlier than anticipated. Also eligible to register are faith based leaders who are at a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 if they are attending to congregants with end of life care, care of deceased persons in their congregation, home visits to unwell persons or pastoral care in hospitals, Long Term Care homes or retirement homes. Proof of eligibility for the vaccine will be required when registering. An email or phone call confirmation will be provided for all registrants.

These vaccinations are for first doses only and second doses will be administered in 16 weeks as more vaccine supplies become available. According to the RCDHU, the rollout plan for the second dose registrations will be made available to the public soon.

Etmanski says that South Algonquin residents have been using the clinic in Barry's Bay for all vaccinations so far as this is the best option right now given the special storage requirements for the Pfizer vaccine.

?The online booking system has been working very well for our residents [at www.rcdhu.com]. We are also assisting any resident with this process if and when they require help registering,? he says.

Etmanski reveals that they will begin contacting their clinic patients who are aged 75 years to 79 years starting on March 23 to let them know they are now eligible to get the vaccine and they will be spreading that message to all residents throughout the township.

?We will also be offering the Astra Zeneca vaccine in our Family Health Team clinic in Whitney once our health unit is able to procure and supply it, hopefully in the near future.?