

COVID-19 and Manitoba Hutterites

A Press Release from the Hutterian Safety Council

July 16, 2020

Hutterites, like all other Manitobans, have been struggling to adapt to the social and economic upheaval caused by COVID-19. When the COVID-19 crisis hit Manitoba, most Hutterite communities adopted protocols to protect their communities. As in many parts of Canada, the response to the virus has been varied.

Since March 2020, the Hutterian Safety Council (HSC) COVID-19 Taskforce has been guiding Hutterite's response to COVID-19, whether formally or informally. The HSC is in direct communication with Manitoba Health to coordinate our responses to the virus.

The HSC acknowledges that, as of July 12, positive cases have been identified in Hutterite communities. It has not been the practice of Manitoba Health nor the HSC to publicly identify individuals or groups because this easily leads to unnecessary stigmatization. Manitoba Health and the HSC will notify the public if a particular case could impact the greater public.

The Hutterite Safety Council recognizes that our communal lifestyle has certain vulnerabilities in regard to viral spread. It has always been the expectation that, as Manitoba began reopening, cases of COVID-19 would appear in Hutterite communities. Many communities diligently protected their most vulnerable citizens, and this continues. The Hutterite way of life may be vulnerable to viruses, but it is also highly adaptable and our members are eager to care for the sick and prevent further spread.

Please note that, to date, no active links have been established between the Manitoba cases and the recent funeral of three drowning victims in Alberta.

HSC has been encouraged by the quick and strict implementation of protocols to prevent spread as soon as word of cases was received from Health Links. Communities immediately went into self-isolation and even members who only had third-party contact received testing.

On July 15, Hutterite church leadership and HSC's COVID19 Taskforce distributed a joint statement to communities to ensure full cooperation with healthcare professionals. (See attached.)

It is expected that more cases will develop in the coming days, and the Hutterian Safety Council will continue monitoring the situation in Hutterite communities and maintain close contact with Manitoba Health to ensure the best and safest outcome of all Manitobans.

For more information, please contact Mark Waldner at hbcovid19@hbsafe.farm.

