health, has confirmed.

Consistently throughout the pandemic, a burning, reoccurring request among residents, has been for the health unit to break down COVID-19 data and cases by community versus the current structure, which is at the county level between Northumberland, Kawartha, and Haliburton. Many have expressed frustration with the process amid rising cases, while also arguing other communities are given this info.

"This is an ongoing issue that I think needs to get resolved and will be getting resolved … over the next few weeks," said Gemmill, as he fielded media questions about the data the health unit is and isn't releasing during a first-time virtual pandemic information forum. "It's not an issue just here — it's an issue in other places, I know."

"And in the absence of provincial guidelines about how to do this, of course every local board or public health agency is doing their presentation of their case count in different ways," Gemmill said, noting he has reviewed case reporting of several public health agencies, particularly in eastern Ontario, but also beyond into Toronto and other areas.

It's a "mixed bag," he said. "We're not the only ones who are doing it by county."

He did also echo previous health officials' comments about the rationale behind releasing data at the higher county level only, in particular with respect to privacy concerns and protecting personal health information.

Especially in those smaller areas, by identifying positive cases, there is concern there's the potential to easily identify those people, said Gemmill, stressing in some instances, there is also stigma attached to cases.

But, moving forward, it sounds as though further guidance could help shape future reporting.

"There has been a request made to Ontario's information and privacy commissioner, and I actually welcome that. And we expect … that we will hear in the next couple to three weeks about what is the right way to do this, and we will be guided by that and whatever the information and privacy commissioner suggests to us we are going to do."