

April 3, 2020

**MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers**

**SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Preparations and Actions**

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In follow-up to our last communication, we are pleased to share the following updates from the provincial Command Table on key actions that are being taken to address COVID-19:

**Stopping the Spread:**

- **Evaluating and assessing** the suite of **public health measures** we have in place and adjusting these as necessary, to ensure that they are employed effectively. Focused actions to support this include:
  - o **Enhancing case contact follow-up**, expanding human resource capacity for this work, as well as training and deploying them to public health units beginning next week.
  - o Exploring **additional authorities** where needed to encourage greater adherence to measures already in place.
- Building on the **success of clearing the backlog of lab tests** and continuing to advance a **broader lab testing strategy**. Work going forward includes:
  - o Monitoring turnaround times.
  - o Continuing to implement a lab testing strategy, informed by scientific guidance, that focuses new lab capacity on population segments (e.g. health care workers, long-term care homes experiencing outbreaks and vulnerable population) and includes other testing methods, such as blood tests and point-of-care testing.
- Actively **supporting long-term care homes** by identifying all appropriate actions to contain outbreaks, increase screening for staff, exploring options to incent and encourage employees to work full-time in one location and identifying opportunities to isolate residents with COVID-19 in other locations or spaces.

## Building Capacity:

- Ongoing preparations for the **critical and acute care bed capacity needed** to meet anticipated demands based on the best available modelling information. This includes:
  - o Supporting local identification of opportunities to increase health system capacity, including assessing readiness, helping to address gaps (e.g., matching Personal Protective Equipment, ventilators, ICU equipment, beds, and Health Human Resources), and providing direction on when to activate this additional capacity.
  - o Continuing improvements in the data collection and measurement of available bed capacity across the system and local readiness to add capacity.
- Continuing to **aggressively procure all available supplies and equipment** to support Ontario's patients and workers. Areas of focus include:
  - o Executing on a provincial allocation and distribution strategy with a focus on delivering critical personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment to the providers that need it most urgently.
  - o Active planning on conservation, reprocessing and alternative/repurposing strategies for PPE.
- Launch a process and tool to facilitate the **matching of broader health human resources** with increasing capacity demands in hospitals, long-term care homes and within the community efficiently and effectively.

Earlier today, the government shared the [modelling and projection data](#) that has been informing the Command Table. This information illustrated the positive impact of the public health measures implemented to date, while also clearly laying out the serious challenges ahead and the importance of making further progress with flattening Ontario's epidemic curve.

We are continuing to improve our stakeholder collaboration and engagement approaches to ensure we can centrally track and address all issues and concerns. Please see the attached report from our **Collaboration Table** yesterday.

We will continue to keep you apprised of actions taken in these key areas and work with you to develop solutions as our pandemic response unfolds.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement with your local partners to prepare for business continuity and for COVID-19's impact on the health system.

Sincerely,

*(original signed by)*

Helen Angus  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Health

Dr. David Williams  
Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Ministry of Health

Matthew Anderson  
President and CEO  
Ontario Health