

April 21, 2020

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

**FROM:** **Helen Angus**  
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health

**Richard Steele**  
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care

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

**RE: Testing in Long-Term Care Homes**

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The Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) have been closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 in the province's long-term care homes. As part of the COVID-19 Action Plan for Protecting Long-Term Care Homes, the Command Table has taken action to increase testing in the province's long-term care homes.

The province will immediately begin proactive surveillance testing to understand the current status of COVID-19 in individual homes, including the targeted testing of asymptomatic residents and staff.

Each Public Health Unit (PHU) should immediately begin developing a local implementation plan, in coordination with the Ontario Health region and MLTC region, to facilitate testing of every resident and staff at each long-term care home. While testing of residents should be a priority, the implementation plan should also enable an understanding of the prevalence of COVID-19 amongst staff, particularly asymptotically.

It is expected that this plan be implemented as soon as possible. PHUs should prioritize homes with a 'red' status and homes currently in outbreak with residents or staff showing symptoms. PHUs can also use their clinical judgment to identify additional information available to prioritize additional testing. PHUs should draw on local supports to increase capacity to support this initiative, such as engaging with local community paramedics.

This point-in-time testing will enable homes, PHUs, and the province to better understand the prevalence of COVID-19 in long-term care homes and inform future planning. Testing is

an important component of a comprehensive response plan being implemented to address COVID-19 in this vulnerable population in order to ensure that these facilities have every resource needed to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

*(original signed by)*

Helen Angus  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Health

Richard Steele  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Long-Term Care

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