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June 23, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

As the newly appointed executive lead of the government's patient safety agenda, I'm writing to you to outline the work that stands before us to improve the safety of patients in Ontario.

I have initiated a process for meeting the schedule of public reporting that former Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman recently announced. The first eight elements and relevant reporting deadlines of this program include infections with *Clostridium difficile* (Sept. 30, 2008), methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (Dec. 31, 2008), vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (Dec. 31, 2008), hospital standardized mortality ratios (Dec. 31, 2008), rates of ventilator-associated pneumonia (April 30, 2009), central line infections and surgical site infections (April 30, 2009), and compliance with hand hygiene among health care workers (April 30, 2009).

This system-wide gathering of information in a uniform way is an important step. I believe that measuring and public reporting of these safety indicators will greatly assist hospitals and public health experts in focusing on improvement for all indicators.

As you know, a number of initiatives have already been taken by the government to improve patient safety in the area of infection control in hospitals, such as:

- Launching of the hand hygiene program to improve hand hygiene among health care workers
- Creating 14 Regional Infection Control Networks to promote the best approaches to infection control and prevention
- Funding 137 infection prevention and control practitioners to prevent health care-acquired infections
- Setting up education programs for front-line health care professionals
- PIDAC's Best practice Document for Management of *Clostridium difficile* in all Health Care Settings, published in December 2004 and updated last November

I will be building upon these initiatives with the help of an expert panel which includes Dr. Michael Gardam, director of infection prevention and control at the University Health Network (UHN); Dr. Vivek Goel, president and CEO designate for Ontario's new Agency for Health Protection and Promotion; Gillian Howard, vice-president of public affairs and communications at UHN; Phil Jackson, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Sarah Kramer, vice-president and chief information officer, Cancer Care Ontario; Elaine Kuretzky, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Sudha Kutty, Ontario Hospital Association; Dr. Don Low, medical director of the Ontario Public Health Laboratory; Janice Skot, CEO of Royal Victoria Hospital; and Dr. Mary Vearncombe, a member of the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. I have also consulted informally with many others and will continue to consult with you and other stakeholders to achieve these commitments and build on them in the future.

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The first priority is to ensure that all Ontario hospitals are ready to publicly report on *Clostridium difficile-associated disease* (CDAD) rates by September 30, 2008 and that you have the tools and education to help you reach this goal.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Public Health Division – in collaboration with the Ontario Hospital Association and the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion – will prepare and implement this educational program for hospital administration, health care teams and public health units.

As a first step, I urge you to attend the OHA/MOHLTC webcast on Thursday June 26th, from 1pm – 3pm for a ministry update on CDAD and public reporting (contact the OHA/Rebecca Moonah at 416-205-1355 for details).

This is a very important matter that's before us – one that strikes at the very confidence the public has in Ontario's hospitals.

I have every confidence that together we can meet the reporting deadlines, and building on initiatives already in place, we can make significant and lasting improvements in patient safety.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dr. Michael Baker
Executive Lead – Patient Safety

cc: Hon. David Caplan, MPP
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

Ron Sapsford
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care