

March 30, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers

SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Preparations and Actions

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:

- Promoting **enhanced public health measures** to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario, building on the government's March 28th [order](#) to prohibit organized public events and social gatherings of more than five people, with some exceptions.
 - o Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a [statement](#) today to further clarify advice on physical distancing measures for the general public and self-isolation measures to protect those at greater risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19.
- Further protecting long-term care homes, beyond the government's March 28th [order](#) to ensure that staffing and resources are available to help care for and protect long-term care residents during the COVID-19 crisis. These additional measures include:
 - o Developing a **coordinated implementation approach** with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, local public health units, and other health care organizations to ensure that long-term care home providers have the support they need to operationalize the new orders and directives and have the capacity needed to implement enhanced infection protection and control measures.
- Continuing efforts to **increase provincial lab testing capacity, which has increased by over 150% to approximately 4,800 tests per day as of March 29th and reduce the backlog of tests, which has decreased by a third since March 25th**. Additional actions will focus on:
 - o Continuing to increase the supply of reagent necessary for testing, new testing options and increasing lab capacity by leveraging hospital, community, and research labs for clinical testing purposes; and
 - o Ensuring the provincial lab testing approach going forward aligns and supports priority COVID-19 actions, such as active surveillance and protecting vulnerable populations.

- Working with health care provider organizations to support implementation of the Minister's order under the *Health Promotion and Protection Act* to provide daily reports to Ontario Health on their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) inventories. Additional actions include:
 - o Working with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (MGCS) and Ontario Health to **facilitate PPE donations** identified through the [Ontario Together](#) website and support provider access and timely distribution of these supplies regionally;
 - o Closely monitoring the delivery dates for ordered supplies and equipment to ensure they are available to meet an anticipated increase in demand over the next two weeks;
 - o Working with the Ministry of Transportation to create capacity to distribute needed supplies in real time for those organizations that do not have traditional distribution centres; and
 - o Supporting allocation and distribution decisions using an ethical lens.

- Ensuring sufficient health human resource capacity to continue to provide high quality care and services. Additional actions include:
 - o Accelerating actions to **centrally match the supply of available health care providers to demands across the health system**, working with health regulatory colleges and key sector associations, as well as regional tables.
 - o Providing additional guidance on the meaning of **essential health care services** for health care providers.

Today the government, in collaboration with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and in consultation with the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA), Ontario Health and the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), [announced](#) a new directive on health and safety standards for frontline nurses in hospitals in order to prevent exposure to and transmission of COVID-19. This measure is intended to protect frontline nurses and to recognize their clinical training and experience to help to keep Ontarians and hospitals safe and healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak. A joint statement from the province, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the ONA can be found [here](#).

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)

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