

December 16, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers

SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Preparations and Actions

This week, the Health Coordination Table focused on the following key actions to enable Ontario's health care system to effectively respond to COVID-19:

- **Implementing targeted actions to support long-term care and retirement homes with outbreak prevention and management.**
 - The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Long-Term Care, and Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility continue to work with Ontario Health and other partners to implement, and identify opportunities to further scale up rapid antigen testing in long-term and retirement homes across the province. These efforts will enhance asymptomatic screening and enable proactive case identification in homes to prevent and support rapid management of outbreaks.
- **Opening additional new hospital beds across the province and enabling innovative solutions to further expand hospital capacity to deliver care to patients and meet escalating service demands.**
 - On December 15th, Ontario Health issued a memo to all hospital CEOs directing them to work with their regional/sub-regional COVID-19 response structures to be prepared to and/or activate surge capacity planning within 48 hours.
 - To support this planning, the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health have provided flexibility to hospitals to facilitate inter-hospital patient transfers within and across regions to create additional capacity where needed and appropriate.
- **Learning from the implementation of ID NOW diagnostic testing and Panbio Rapid Antigen screening pilots to maximize provincial testing capacity, increase access to testing with faster test turnaround times and enable rapid identification of positive patients in outbreak settings.**
 - In addition to prioritizing the use of rapid tests in long-term care and retirement homes, the Ministry of Health is working with Ontario Health to implement screening tests in a variety of Ontario workplaces, with over 100+ employers across the province currently participating in the Employer Rapid Antigen Screening Pilot.

- Rapid diagnostic testing has been deployed to hospitals, public health units and long-term care homes to enable faster test results in urgent situations and to First Nations and Indigenous communities to help reduce long testing turnaround times due to weather and transportation.
- **Implementing targeted health human resources (HHR) programs to support the increased supply, distribution and retention of the health workforce in Ontario.**
 - Continued efforts will focus on addressing the co-dependencies in HHR needs across the different health and long-term care sectors and opportunities to prioritize and maximize resources.
- **Rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine to prioritized populations as part of phase 1 of Ontario's vaccine implementation plan.**
 - On December 15th, 431 vaccines were provided across the first two hospital sites in the first day of implementation.

We thank you for your continued work to respond to the pandemic and implement a phased recovery.

Sincerely,

(original signed by)

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