

January 27, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers

SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Planning 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:

- **Identifying new strategies to address the introduction of the COVID-19 variant (B1.1.7) into the Ontario population in order to control the transmission and maintain sufficient health system capacity.**
 - Due to the increased transmission risk of the variant, the Ministry will continue to enforce all public health recommendations currently in place with increased rigor, based on recommendations from health and science experts. For instance, increased border testing and screening, targeted case and contact management, protecting vulnerable populations and more in-depth analytics.
- **Ongoing expansion of the use of rapid diagnostic and screening tests to target high risk populations.**
 - Rapid antigen screening continues to be prioritized for long-term care, retirement home, schools, congregate living settings, airports, and essential industries.
 - High priority communities and land borders have been included in the rapid antigen screening expansion to mitigate transmission risks and connect individuals with the supports they need.
- **Monitoring the implementation of additional ICU and acute beds across the province to expand hospital and critical care capacity.**
 - The Ministry is actively reviewing and evaluating programs that were implemented to increase hospital bed capacity and are preparing for the launch of new programs to support additional acute care and ICU beds.
- **Continuing efforts on the procurement and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment to strengthen the appropriate use in hospitals, long-term care and retirement homes.**
 - The Ministry of Health presented the latest data on current and projected provincial supply for N95 and face shields. The Ministry of Health will continue to monitor the impact of the variants on the potential increased need for personal protective equipment.

- The Ministry of Health continues to proactively communicate with the long-term care sector on the one-time 8-week N95 supply program to encourage participation.
- **Implementing the new strategic plan for COVID-19 outbreak prevention and preparedness in schools and childcare settings.**
 - The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have developed a plan that focuses on strategic coordination and advice; to monitor outbreak preparedness, planning, and response activities in the education sector.
 - This strategy emphasizes operational considerations through infection, prevention, control and other public health measures; outbreak case and contact management; capacity, communications and public confidence; and surveillance, screening and testing.
 - A school focused nurse initiative will complement the strategy where public health nurses have been deployed in schools to provide rapid response support in facilitating preventive measures relating to COVID-19 including screening, testing, tracing and mitigation strategies.
- **Increasing attention to IPAC enforcement and testing to continue to monitor and prevent outbreaks of COVID-19 and other variants in Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes.**
 - The Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility are focusing on the expansion of the rapid-antigen screening among residents and staff to provide timely surveillance and containment of transmission.
- **Reviewed most recent scientific data and evidence to inform advice to government on the ongoing pandemic response.**
 - The Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables presented the latest COVID-19 case projections, trends and their expected impacts on public health and health system capacity.
 - New evidence on the effectiveness of the pharmaceuticals Colchicine, Heparin and Banlanivimab in the treatment of COVID-19 were presented.

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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