

**Expert Panel on SARS and
Infectious Disease Control**



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Dear Member of the Health Community:

I am writing to you in what has been a difficult time for all members of the health care community. SARS has tested our resources, both personal and institutional, and the community has met the challenge. Now lies before us the important work of reviewing Ontario's response to SARS and planning for the future.

There are currently different reviews concerning SARS taking place in Ontario. The National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health, chaired by Dr. David Naylor, is providing advice to the federal government and drawing lessons learned from a federal context. The independent SARS Commission of Mr. Justice Archie Campbell was announced in June.

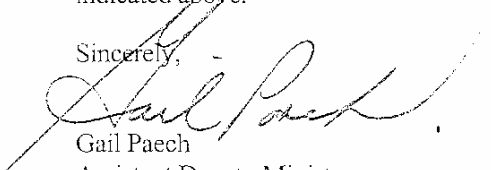
The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has established the Expert Panel on Severe Acute Respiratory System (SARS) and Infectious Disease Control, chaired by Dr. David Walker, Dean of Medicine at Queen's University. The Terms of Reference and membership of the Panel are attached to this letter. A Panel Secretariat has been established to provide research and policy support to the Panel as required.

The Panel is examining, from an Ontario perspective, system-wide issues such as infectious disease management and health system capacity. It will take a forward-looking approach on what should be done to protect against future infectious disease outbreaks in Ontario. The Panel will produce an interim report in the Fall and the final report with recommendations will be submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care by the end of December.

From now until December, the Panel will be carrying out an ambitious program of work describing the response to SARS and identifying lessons learned. For example, the Panel will be studying the health care field perspectives on SARS; the government response; interviewing staff and gathering statistical data from within government and in health care facilities; and calling for submissions from stakeholders at a date to be announced in the near future. We will keep you apprised of further activities that concern your institution as they are developed.

The Panel Secretariat may be contacting you soon concerning your involvement in the activities noted above. We are mindful of the demands that are being made on your time as a result of these different review processes mentioned above, and will make every effort to minimize the impact on you and your institutions. In the meantime, should you have questions, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Panel Secretariat at the address indicated above.

Sincerely,



Gail Paech

Assistant Deputy Minister
Expert Panel Secretariat

Terms of Reference: Expert Panel on Infectious Disease Control

- The purpose of Ontario's Expert Panel on Infectious Disease Control is to review the ability of Ontario's Healthcare System to effectively maintain services during and appropriately respond to future infectious disease emergencies using lessons learned during Ontario's SARS emergency. The Expert Panel will draw upon the best multi-disciplinary and sectoral expertise to achieve this objective.

Mandate:

To determine the key lessons learned in the Ontario health system handling of the SARS outbreak and with this understanding, provide practical, focused and forward-looking advice on all appropriate health system measures to strengthen infectious disease control on a sectoral and system-wide level in Ontario.

To provide advice and recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the design and implementation of planned and future infectious disease management initiatives; including assessing required reserve/surge capacity in the system, research and measures to strengthen infection control, public health and system response capabilities.

Objectives:

- Review the ability of Ontario's Healthcare System to effectively maintain services during and appropriately respond to future infectious disease emergencies using lessons learned during Ontario's SARS emergency. Reports should focus on the systemic, procedural, informational, cultural and organizational lessons learned for the future in order to build upon our successes and benefit from an improved health system capacity to respond.
- Build upon the spirit of cooperation that has guided Ontario through the crisis to date and identify the key measures required to strengthen Ontario capacity to prevent, respond to and manage future infectious diseases on a system-wide level.
- Produce practical, focused and forward looking advice pertaining to all levels and sectors regarding future approaches to Infectious Disease Control. Special emphasis should be placed upon learnings regarding SARS that are transferable to the prevention, identification and management of other infectious disease outbreaks in the future.

Composition:

- The Panel shall be comprised of a Chair, and members with recognized expertise in their respective fields.
- Ex-officio members will be appointed as required.

Timing:

- The Expert Panel shall have a sunset date of December 31st 2003 unless reasonable extension is granted by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.