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DATE: September 24, 2003

TO: Health Care Facilities and Service Providers in Ontario

FROM: Allison J. Stuart, Executive Lead
SARS Operations Centre (SOC)
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

RE: Status Update

Over the past several months the Ministry has issued directives to the field that match the level of protection required for staff and patients to the risk of SARS in the community. These directives have been based on the best science available at the time and draw on the expertise of leading clinicians. They build upon the existing framework for health and safety in the workplace, as outlined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and provide sound principles for ensuring the effective diagnosis, treatment and management of SARS patients.

We have previously distributed directives to your organization and have posted them on the Ministry website (www.health.gov.on.ca). The current directives in effect are:

- *Transition Directives to Acute Care Facilities in the Greater Toronto Area (Toronto, York and Durham Regions) August 6, 2003, Directive 03-10(R)*
- *Directives to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities May 13, 2003, Directive 03-04(R)*
- *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Hospitals Concerning Discharge of Non-SARS Patients June 20, 2003, Directive 03-02(R)*
- *Directive to all Ontario Acute Care Hospitals Concerning Discharge of SARS Patients (including probable and suspect cases) June 20, 2003, Directive 03-03(R)*

- *Directive to all Ontario Acute Care Hospitals for High-Risk Procedures June 16, 2003, Directive 03-11*
- *Directive to All Ontario Rehabilitation, Complex Continuing Care and Specialty Hospitals July 15, 2003, Directive R03-02*
- *Directive to all Ontario Rehabilitation, Complex Continuing Care and Specialty Hospitals June 16, 2003, Directive R03-01*
- *Directive to all Ontario Non-Acute Care Facilities July 15, 2003, Directive L03-05*
- *Directive to all Ontario Non-Acute Care Facilities June 16, 2003, Directive L03-04(R)*
- *Directive to all Community Care Access Centres June 17, 2003, Directive CC03-04(R)*
- *Directive to all Ontario Health Care Providers in Community Settings and Community Health Care Agencies (excluding Community Care Access Centres) July 15, 2003, Directive HCP03-02*
- *Directive to Ontario Health Care Providers in Community Settings and Community Health Care Agencies (excluding Community Care Access Centres) June 16, 2003, Directive HCP03-01(R)*
- *Directive to all Ontario Prehospital Care Providers and Ambulance Communications Services May 13, 2003*
- *Directive to All Health Care Facilities regarding Inter-Facility Patient Transfers May 12, 2003*

Your continued adherence to the directives appropriate to your environment is both valued and expected. It also positions you well should there be a further manifestation of SARS in Ontario.

In the coming weeks you can expect to receive additional materials that update current practices in the pre-hospital, acute care, non-acute care and community settings, and provides information for both outbreak and non-outbreak conditions. In addition, the *Guide to the Control of Respiratory Disease Outbreaks in Long-Term Care Facilities* (2001) will be updated.

Material is being reviewed by reference groups prior to distribution to enhance the ease of use in the various health care settings. The reference groups include the Medical Reference Group, Medical Officers of Health Group, Ontario Hospital Association, the SARS Nursing Advisory Committee and the Toronto Reference Group, and reflect the diversity of health care service providers. The feedback to date from the reference groups on the

- draft *Regional SARS Response Levels & Paradigm,*
- draft *Directive to All Acute Care Facilities regarding the Application of Respiratory and Contact Precautions (Enhanced) With Persons Under Investigation, SARS Patients and SARS Units,*
- draft *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities Regarding Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance,*
- draft *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities Under Non-Outbreak Conditions, and*

- draft *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities Under Outbreak Conditions*

has been helpful as it reflects the high level of commitment to sustained vigilance regarding SARS and also the diversity of opinion as to how that is best done.

The following materials will be distributed by October 9, 2003:

- *Directive to All Acute Care Facilities regarding the Application of Respiratory and Contact Precautions (Enhanced) With Persons Under Investigation, SARS Patients and SARS Units*
- *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities Regarding Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance*
- *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities Under Non-Outbreak Conditions*
- *Directive to All Ontario Acute Care Facilities Under Outbreak Conditions*
- *Directive to all Ontario Prehospital Care Providers and Ambulance Communications Services*
- *Directive to All Health Care Facilities regarding Inter-Facility Patient Transfers*

At that time, we will also provide you with an update on the distribution dates for the remaining items. Information on best practices will also be forthcoming.

Our toll free number (1-866-212-2272) continues to be available 24/7 to address any emerging questions or concerns from health care facilities and service providers.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Original signed by

Allison J. Stuart