

April 6, 2020

**MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers**

**SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Preparations and Actions**

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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:

**Managing Disease Spread:**

- Continue to focus immediate actions to contain the spread of COVID-19 among **priority populations** through the following protocols:
  - o **Ensuring active surveillance** in long-term care homes and retirement homes, **and increasing testing for COVID-19 cases**. This will include increased testing for residents, staff, and other critical caregivers, such as volunteers, to inform implementation of appropriate containment strategies in these settings.
  - o Updating **infection control guidance for long-term care homes and retirement homes** and working with the sector to help implement these measures across the system.
  - o **Increasing testing** for other priority populations such as **First Nations and Indigenous communities**, and those living in **congregate settings**.
  
- Continue to assess and align the suite of **provincial public health measures** with federal and municipal guidance and in consideration of modelling information to flatten the epidemic curve. Immediate actions include:
  - o In step with federal directions, provide guidance on the use of cloth masks for the general public to ensure that clinical PPE is reserved for those front-line staff providing care in hospitals and the community.

## Expanding Health System Capacity:

- Continued **implementation of new capacity** across the health system to meet anticipated capacity demands based on the best modelling information available. Immediate actions include:
  - o Continuing to identify and activate new hospital capacity, with targets informed by updated modeling information;
  - o Issuing guidance materials regarding the use of alternate health facilities and temporary structures such as field hospitals and conference centres;
  - o Providing project management and contract services support to assist providers with the activation of alternate health facilities; and
  - o Executing on the alignment of the activation of new hospital capacity with the allocation and distribution of supplies and equipment, as well as the deployment of health human resources capacity.
  
- Targeted actions to ensure Ontario's patients and workers have the critical supplies and equipment they need by focusing implementation efforts in four areas:
  1. **Distribution of PPE** to the settings and sectors that need it most;
  2. Identification of approaches to **conserve PPE**, working with providers on how best to implement these in workplaces;
  3. **Harnessing expertise and capacity in other Ontario industries** towards the production of clinical supplies and equipment, working with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade; and
  4. **Reprocessing of PPE** in alignment with forthcoming guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada.
  
- Facilitate rapid matching and deployment of the **15,000 broader health human resources** identified through the volunteer website to the providers and settings with the greatest capacity challenges.

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)*

Helen Angus  
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Ministry of Health

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Chief Medical Officer of Health  
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