

March 25, 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:

- Continued activities to **increase provincial lab testing capacity and reduce the backlog of tests**, including:
  - o Implementation of a provincial coordination network – 2,300 tests from Public Health labs are being reallocated across the network today to reduce the testing backlog.
  - o Acceleration of assessments of new testing options to unlock a potential 4,000 additional tests per day.
  - o Increasing lab capacity by leveraging hospital, community, and research labs for clinical testing purposes.
  - o Through the rapid implementation of all of these actions, it is forecasted that the total daily provincial COVID-19 testing capacity could be over 15,000 tests per day by April 17<sup>th</sup>.
- **Augmenting capacity in supplies and equipment by managing the current demand** and coordinating with OH to ensure the priority distribution of PPE to the areas that need it most urgently, **conserving** the existing available supply of PPE based on scientific and clinical evidence, and **actively sourcing** supplies from vendors, the Federal government and voluntary donations.
  - o More than 125 leads are actively being pursued and a number of procurements were confirmed in the last 72 hours.
  - o For example, Ontario has recently secured millions of surgical gloves, N95 respirators, and surgical masks, and more procurements are being completed all the time.
- **Adding 100 Registered Nurses** to augment Telehealth capacity by next week and actions to improve return call times.

- Introducing **new regulations** to **ease the movement of hospital ALC patients into long-term care homes** and provide more direction on the issue of patient choice for long-term care home placements.
- Mobilizing health human resources capacity throughout the system – to date, **5,000 volunteers** have signed up through the central website and are available to be matched to health care providers and organizations that need additional support. The development of tools and processes are underway to match regional needs with available capacity.
- **Identifying additional bed capacity** in alternative community settings to support individuals who are homeless or in shelters and health care workers who need temporary housing arrangements.

We are also improving our approach to tracking and addressing stakeholder issues and concerns, as identified on the 9 a.m. stakeholder calls and at the Collaboration Table. In advance of the **Collaboration Table** tomorrow, we have sought updates and questions in advance, to support a productive discussion on needs and concerns that are top-of-mind for our stakeholders.

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  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Health

Dr. David Williams  
Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Ministry of Health

Matthew Anderson  
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Ontario Health