

March 20, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers

SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Preparations and Actions

In follow-up to our last communication, we are pleased to share the following updates from the provincial Command Table on key preparations that are being taken to address COVID-19:

- Accelerating actions to **reduce the backlog of laboratory tests** and **increase testing capacity**, working in partnership with Public Health Ontario, Ontario Health, the Federal government, and local health system organizations.
 - This includes increasing the current system's capacity from 3,000 tests per day to 5,000 tests per day by next week.
- **Investing in enhanced bed capacity in hospitals**, supporting regional decisions on activation opportunities for new beds, and continuing work across ministries and sectors to identify additional bed capacity in long-term care homes, retirement homes and other spaces in the community.
- **Further mobilizing primary capacity** in the response to, and triage of calls related to COVID-19.
- Launched the next version of the **online Self-Assessment tool** on Ontario.ca to help the public understand their risks and their options for care.
- **Significantly increased Telehealth capacity** to ensure Ontarians receive timely responses to their concerns and are triaged to the appropriate setting to receive the care they need.
 - This includes quadrupling its call lines and doubling the number of nurses who are calling back people with COVID-19 related questions.

- Working with suppliers, distributors, local partners and the Federal Government to **address shortages in critical supplies and equipment.**
 - This includes procurements of gloves, masks, and eye protection to date, with many other opportunities being pursued.
 - The ministry is actively working with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to leverage opportunities with industries, businesses and innovators to source the necessary supplies and equipment, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
 - The ministry and Ontario Health are also supporting the development of guidance on the use of PPE outside of the health care sector.
- **Enabled virtual professional home care services** through the introduction of new billing codes and guidance.

In follow-up to a meeting of the **Collaboration Table yesterday**, the ministry is examining the suggestions, concerns and comments brought forward by stakeholders, actioning each item across government and tracking progress in addressing these areas. We will continue to report progress at Collaboration Table meetings and through these updates. Please see the attached document for a summary of issues identified by the Collaboration Table.

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
President and CEO
Ontario Health