

March 16, 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:

- To further preserve the capacity of Ontario's hospitals to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and in follow-up to the [Minister's statement](#) on **elective surgeries and non-emergent activities** yesterday evening, we issued a memo to Ontario Health and hospitals with additional principles to guide operational decision-making in their planned approaches to ramp down of these activities.
- We are also actively considering opportunities to provide targeted and aligned guidance to other health care professional sectors (e.g., dentistry) on routine/elective and urgent procedures.
- Formal recommendation from the Chief Medical Officer of Health to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation was released yesterday to **suspend casino operations** for the next few weeks.
- An **online self-assessment tool** was finalized and posted yesterday at Ontario.ca.
- Additional guidance will be formalized through the Chief Medical Officer of Health on **expanding self-isolation and social distancing measures** and clarifying advice that has been provided by the various levels of government.
- Augmenting Telehealth capacity with **additional call lines** to address increasing call volumes and implementing **additional measures to increase capacity**, including further hiring of clinical staff, directing callers to the use of the self-assessment tool and identifying capacity across settings/sectors to support assessment and triage.

- OH Regional Tables accelerating capacity planning **to maximize acute care bed availability**, reduce ALC, and maximize long-term care and home care placements.
- Looking at opportunities to **accelerate virtual care options** to increase capacity and alleviate pressure in hospitals, home and community, and long-term care.
- Twenty-five **Assessment Centres are now operational**, with additional centres to come on line on an accelerated timeline.
- Continuous efforts to **procure PPE and other supplies and equipment**, as well as assess and monitor critical needs to enable the safe delivery of care by our health care professionals.

We are also pleased to welcome Dr. Thomas Stewart, CEO & President of St. Joseph's Health System and CEO of Niagara Health to the Command Table. Dr. Stewart is a well-known and highly-regarded health system leader and critical care doctor whose knowledge and experience will contribute immensely to our planning efforts.

We will continue to communicate progress on these actions as they are implemented.

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
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