



Ontario Health

To: Health System Partners

From: Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health

SUBJECT: April 29, 2020 -- Update #3: Health System COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Current modelling used to inform pandemic planning shows that actions taken by the provincial government, partners right across the health system and Ontarians may be starting to flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the general community. This is a testament to the determination of us all to do our bit as individuals, as families, as health system teams.

Despite this encouraging glimmer of hope, we must keep doing all that we are doing and not squander the important progress made so far. This means we cannot slacken our efforts to adhere to any of the public health measures in place. The reality is the pandemic continues to be a significant threat for at-risk residents and staff in long-term care and other vulnerable group living facilities.

Working with the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, and our regional and local pandemic planning partners, we continue to mobilize resources and logistical support to tackle the long-term care challenges and break the chain of coronavirus transmission.

Long-Term Care

The Ontario Health Regions are working in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Long-Term Care, Public Health Ontario, local public health units, Ontario hospitals and others on:

- The testing of all residents and staff at long-term care homes, including those who are asymptomatic.
- Surveillance and monitoring to track “hot spots” at risk of outbreaks in individual homes.
- The provision of supplies and personal protective equipment.
- Infection prevention and control measures and training.
- Redeployment of health care workers, including staff from the local health integration networks going into homes in distress.

- This work includes Ontario Health (HealthForceOntario) and the Regions matching health professionals across the system who have signed up online on the onhealthworkforcematching.ca portal to volunteer at long-term care homes that need help providing personal care for frail residents.

We are also working to support Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People.

Indigenous Health

- Indigenous health directors from across the North are engaged with an Ontario Health North COVID-19 Indigenous Health Working Group and helping to support rural/remote access to testing, PPE and other emergency supplies, public health measures, and increased communication and engagement, to help boost First Nation readiness.
- Testing access and better turnaround times have been achieved through satellite testing sites, mobile units, paramedic home visits and working with Ornge and/or Air Canada to expedite flight pick up and more efficient delivery of swabs to provincial lab testing centres. This continues to be an area of focus for improvement.
- One-on-one work continues with First Nations and Indigenous partners to support increased capacity where needed and community readiness.

Testing

- Expanded testing capability and some faster turnaround times on lab results coordinated by the COVID-19 Diagnostic Network Operations Centre is enabling public health units to ramp up testing of residents and staff in long-term care homes and other vulnerable communities.
- It is anticipated that 16,000 tests a day can be achieved by May 6.
- To date, there have been over 147,000 visits to the online COVID Test Results Viewer where people can review their test results.

Supply Chain: Conservation Strategies

- Province-wide coordinated work continues to monitor usage and conserve essential PPE and other equipment.
- This also includes long-term care and other high-risk settings being provided with the supplies they require to expand screening and testing, and infection control measures.
- All of this is supported by supply chain collaborative work in the Regions with local hospital and other partners.

Critical Care

- The Ontario Critical Care COVID Command Centre is monitoring usage of all critical care drugs across the province to ensure stable supply.
- The Command Centre includes a Critical Care Drug Shortage Task Force to respond to issues of potential ICU drug shortages and whose work includes analyzing information pharmacy directors across the province are providing twice weekly.
- The Ministry of Health is prioritizing procurement of key drugs through group purchasing.

Virtual Care

- Two new regional virtual care service models are now available in the Ontario Health Toronto and West Regions. Both provide triage and screening leading to virtual COVID-19 care. Since the launch in late March, more than 15,000 people have used these tools resulting in over 250 receiving immediate care from a nurse or primary care physician through a virtual visit. These tools are designed to support people in their homes while still providing them with immediate access to a care provider.
- The Ontario Virtual Care Clinic is a means for Ontarians without family doctors, or those challenged to access their family doctors, to contact a family physician virtually and 24/7 to address non-COVID-19 health issues and to help relieve pressure on hospitals and ERs. Patients can access this service via www.seethedoctor.ca.
- A care app is supporting virtual video-enabled visits between primary care physicians and nurses in long-term care homes, and a consult line is providing primary care physicians and nurse practitioners in long-term care and retirement homes with 24/7 access to general medicine specialists.
- Microsoft Teams is being deployed to the local health integration networks to enable video and audio conferencing between patients and home and community care providers.
- There is also unprecedented demand for the Ontario Telemedicine Network (now part of Ontario Health) during the pandemic. The volume of daily virtual care visits on the network has more than doubled between February and mid-April and more than a hundred health care providers are registering every day, enabling patients and providers to be in their location of choice.

Many thanks for your continuing hard work to tame this pandemic.

Matthew Anderson