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March 27, 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:

- **Addressing health sector concerns regarding critical supplies and equipment** needed on the ground to protect health care workers and those who require care by:
  - o Developing **clear communication** to health care providers and organizations on actions the government is taking to address their personal protective equipment (PPE) concerns, providing information on how and when PPE supplies are being added and how they will be delivered to those who need it the most.
  - o Working with partner ministries to **procure supplies** needed by the health care front-lines immediately, including ventilators, respirators and masks as well as additional PPE needed outside of the health system (e.g., corrections officers, police and fire services, and retirement homes)
  - o **Coordinating oversight, access and distribution of supplies and equipment**, including PPE and ventilators, through a **central group** led by the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health, with advice from the Bio-Ethics Table.
    - This group will make decisions regarding **access and distribution of supplies** based on needs, risks and using an ethical allocation framework.
  - o **Augmenting logistical capacity to deliver supplies and equipment** to where they are needed locally and across the health system.
- Operationalizing the **COVID-19 Provincial Diagnostic Network Operations Centre** to address near-term operational constraints, resolve key issues and update on performance.
  - o **Immediate priorities** include addressing lab supply issues, accelerating the assessment of new testing options to rapidly increase the daily number of lab tests that can be conducted and implementing opportunities to leverage hospital, community, and research labs for clinical testing purposes.

- **Daily tracking on key metrics** will enable rapid assessment and proactive actions to address emergent lab testing capacity issues.

As we continue to review metrics, epidemiology, and other evidence, the Command Table is working to:

- Identify **public health and other measures** required to protect the most vulnerable and flatten the curve; and
- **Actions** needed to ensure we have the **supplies and equipment and health human resources capacity, and approaches to allocate to the system**, to respond.

In response the issues raised at our **Collaboration Table** meeting yesterday, the ministry is working with our partners to:

- Provide further insight into Ontario's epidemiology curve, and anticipated timeline of peak of cases in Ontario.
- Provide an update on the distribution of personal protective equipment to health care workers in hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes.
- Issue a guidance on the use of expired supplies (e.g., N95 masks).
- Continue to build health human resources capacity and alternative care setting capacity (e.g., leveraging hotels, rehabilitation facilities, etc.).

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  
President and CEO  
Ontario Health