

Wednesday, January 27th, 2021

Subject: Vaccination roll-out

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Elliott:

Our members/staff are engaged community health providers who have been fighting on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic since it began. We are aware that vulnerable and home-bound individuals in the community are slated as the next priority group to receive vaccinations. These people are cared for by our providers.

While we understand that currently, there is a shortage of vaccines, and that this reality is outside of the province's control, we are concerned that there is not a transparent plan around how needles are going to get into the arms of people identified to be in Stage 2, namely those that are vulnerable and/or home-bound and the providers that care for them.

The province must use this delay to engage with us NOW, so that we are ready to deploy our existing vaccine capabilities to reach our patients expeditiously. Waiting will result in damaging delays. Trying to recreate alternative distribution networks when they currently exist will result in further damaging delays and confusion.

Community health care providers, including primary care nurses, doctors, and pharmacists, as well as home care nurses have demonstrated experience reaching out to our patients to deliver vaccines. Our members/staff are trained in vaccine handling and program delivery. Patients trust their health care providers the most and for the vulnerable, homebound patients, it is imperative that they receive vaccines from the people who know them best. 34 Public Health Units with 34 different approaches – for the most vulnerable there needs to be a consistent approach so that they do not fall through the cracks.

It has been well-established since November, that the Pfizer vaccine has a shelf-life of five days after freezing. The risk of our members/staff not utilizing the vaccinations within this time frame is non-existent, as collectively SE Health, VON and Bayshore complete over 40,000 home visits per day. Unlike the recent vaccine rollout, we are certain that doses provided to our members/staff will be used on the cohorts for which they were intended. We base this on our experience delivering vaccination programs, on the number of people we serve and our ability to access them quickly.

Many who can travel to appointments should be vaccinated through their primary care providers and those who are home-bound will require visits from community nurses. Use our expertise as vaccines are our *'bread and butter'* and we know our patients best.

Our members/staff need to be ready to mobilize immediately. For this reason, we are asking for more provincial direction to plan this critical effort and need government and public health leadership to engage with us. We are all in this together.

Sincerely,



Kavita Mehta
Chief Executive Officer
Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario



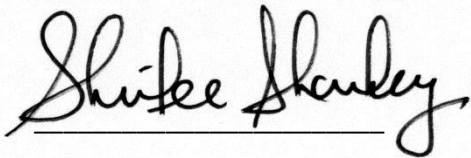
Stuart Cottrell
Chief Executive Officer
Bayshore Healthcare



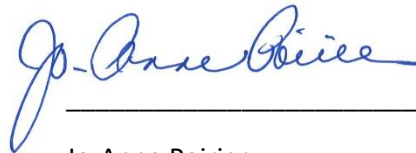
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cc.

Matthew Anderson, President and CEO – Ontario Health
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister of Health
Emily Beduz, Director of Pandemic Response
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister – Pandemic Response and Recovery
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Colleen Geiger, President and CEO (acting) – Public Health Ontario
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Andrea Horwath, NDP Leader
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