

DR. SHEELA BASRUR HONOURED AS NEW ONTARIO AGENCY FOR HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION UNVEILS INAUGURAL CEO

McGuinty Government Provides Update on Protecting Ontarians Five Years After SARS Outbreak

NEWS

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TORONTO – Five years after the SARS outbreak, Ontario has reached a milestone in the overhaul of emergency health planning with the appointment of the founding president and CEO of the new Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, the province’s first ever, arms-length public health agency.

Dr. Vivek Goel – currently vice-president and provost at the University of Toronto – will head the new agency, which is modeled on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Located at MaRS, the office will be named the *Sheela Basrur Centre* after the former Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto during the SARS outbreak.

QUOTES

“The legacy of the 44 Canadians who lost their lives to SARS lives in this new agency,” said Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman. “We are determined to make Ontario a world-leader in emergency health planning and in public health to make sure that we are prepared for an outbreak like SARS.”

“Dr. Vivek Goel is one of the most respected health care researchers and population health scientists in the province,” said Dr. David Walker, board chair of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion. “His extensive experience in health care evaluation and research, his administrative skills and training and above all his passion for the future of this new agency make him an ideal choice to head up the new agency.”

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario has the integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS), an advanced infectious disease surveillance system. This gives early warning signals to 36 public health units, which assist them in managing disease outbreaks through collection, transmission and analysis of data.
- In accordance with the “Precautionary Principle,” Ontario is stockpiling up to 55 million specially designed N95 respirators to provide a higher level of respiratory protection for

the wearer compared to surgical masks, this means safety first and foremost for Ontario's health care workers.

- The government gave the Chief Medical Officer of Health more independent powers to take action to prevent, reduce or eliminate health risks.
- The government developed the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHP/IP) which is updated annually, in partnership with health care experts.
- Ontario is unveiling a comprehensive hand hygiene program – *Just Clean Your Hands* – for health care workers at all hospitals that gets underway tomorrow.

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