

April 21, 2021

**MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers**

**SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Planning and Actions**

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This week, the Health Coordination Table focused on the following key actions to enable Ontario's health care system to effectively respond to COVID-19:

- **Responding to the surge in hospital volumes by increasing Health Human Resources to enable additional capacity, and to support primary care led models to manage COVID patients at home.**
  - In order to manage hospital capacity pressures, the ministry will be tracking the addition of net new critical care and ICU beds in the system. In addition, the ministry has issued a new directive to ramp down scheduled surgeries that will alleviate existing bed capacity and enable the redeployment of those staff.
  - Data has shown that patients are seeking primary care support in greater volumes through virtual care in the third wave. Ontario Health is working with The Canadian Medical Protective Association, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, on communications around the importance of continuing uptake of preventative care, such as cancer screening, in identifying and managing chronic illness. In addition, the ministry is supporting the expansion of the COVID@Home model of care by supplying O2 statistics monitors to effectively provide care to COVID patients at home
- **Continuing efforts to improve access to testing and vaccines in support of communities with high rates of COVID-19 through targeted programs.**
  - The ministry provided an update on the High Priority Community Strategy that includes the expansion of existing community outreach and education programs, increased access to testing, and wrap around services to help address the disproportionate burden of cases seen in specific communities.

- To meet the needs of these communities, the ministry continues to develop strategies in other settings such as workplace vaccination clinics and workplace and school testing programs, infection control policies.
- **Reviewing the most recent scientific evidence on the effectiveness of paid sick leave policies and the enforcement of curfews to inform advice to government on the ongoing pandemic response**
  - The Science Advisory Table presented an analysis of paid sick leave policies and the potential influence on COVID-19 transmission within the workplace.
  - Additional analysis was presented on the relationship between the enforcement of public curfews and the transmission of COVID-19, which indicates potential challenges associated with enforcement, exacerbation of existing inequities, and increased daytime mobility.
- **Examining the adherence to and attitudes towards public health measures to limit COVID-19 spread in Ontario.**
  - The ministry commissioned a Health Behaviour Surveillance Study to provide insight on the awareness of and adherence to public health measures, and clarity on public perceptions of Ontario's public health restrictions and vaccine hesitancy. The ministry will consider this information as it plans future public health messaging and guidance.

We thank you for your continued work to respond to the pandemic and implement a phased recovery.

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