



Ontario Health

To: Health System Partners

From: Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health

SUBJECT: April 8, 2020 -- Update #1: Health System COVID-19 Pandemic Response

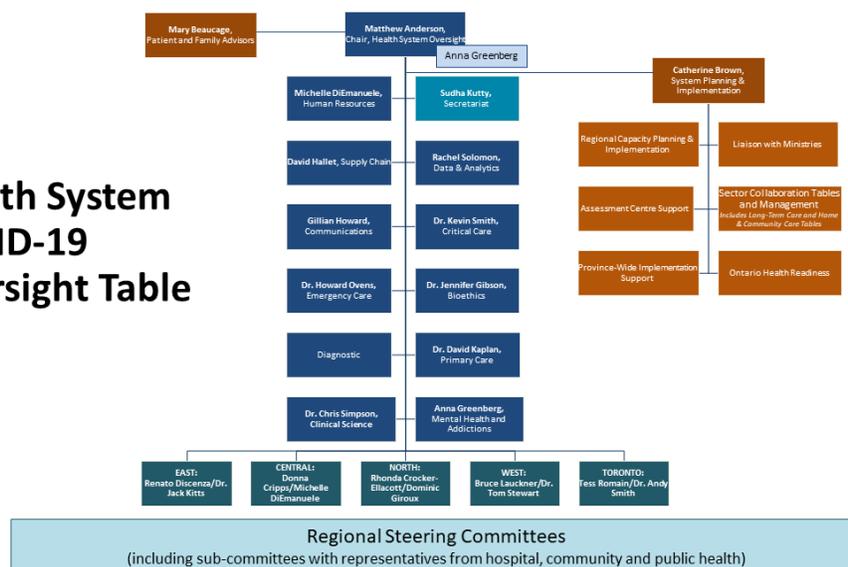
Today begins our regular updates about the ongoing work of the pandemic response teams across Ontario. This work is in support of the extensive efforts underway by Ontario's COVID-19 Command Table, chaired by Helen Angus, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Health, and accountable to Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. We are all working together, in every role, to protect Ontarians and health care workers, and to ensure we are equipped to ramp up quickly and respond nimbly to meet urgent, complex and growing needs. Thank you to everyone across the system for your diligence and efforts – as individuals and organizations – to reduce the spread of disease.

We've put in place a **COVID-19 Health System Response structure** to support the regional and local implementation of the province's COVID-19 plan. A massive amount of work is in high gear on the priorities below:

Health System Response structure

- Province-wide oversight focused on supply chain, data and analytics, critical care, primary care, emergency care, bioethics, diagnostic capacity, clinical / operational guidance, mental health and addictions, health human resources and communications.
- System planning for implementation.
- Regional steering committees in five regions, working on hospital and community care delivery, and broader system pandemic response, and working to engage with our indigenous partners to ensure ongoing responsiveness to their unique community needs.

Health System COVID-19 Oversight Table



Modelling COVID-19 Resource Utilization and Capacity

- A team is continuously analyzing data to forecast pandemic trajectories and identify emerging issues that could impede delivering quality care. Models are shared with the COVID-19 Command Table to help inform ongoing planning.
- First projections shared at a media briefing April 3rd.

Capacity Planning

- Elective surgeries delayed and ALC patients are being thoughtfully moved to other care settings with the appropriate care and support to free up hospital space for the anticipated surge in COVID-19 patients.
- Ontario Health convening a panel of experts to address the needs of surgical and procedure-based patients in the province during this extraordinary time.
- Advising on how to provide and organize surgical care for patients with cancer, cardiovascular, and transplants needing time-sensitive, urgent surgery during the pandemic.
- Will begin similar work to support patients on an outpatient basis as well.

Assessment Centres

- To expand screening and ease pressures on hospital emergency departments, Ontario has established 98 assessment centres throughout the province. The centres are in dedicated spaces to facilitate high-quality care and protect broader patient populations.

- Decisions regarding assessment centres are made at Regional tables, in co-ordination with local health system partners – including local public health units – based on local needs.
- Regional partners determine if additional assessment centres are needed, or if current processes can be adapted, based on local needs.

Critical Care

- A Critical Care COVID-19 Command Centre is planning for a major surge by increasing the availability of critical care beds across the province, using innovative staffing models and re-purposing existing spaces and equipment to maximize critical care bed capacity.
- This Command Centre is operational and actively supporting the field.

Health Human Resources

- We are engaging with the collaborative table with key stakeholders.
- Guidance and materials are available about: Retirees re-joining the workforce; Workplace accommodation for at-risk front-line health care providers; Health care workers employed at multiple sites or organizations; Employees over 70 years; Work refusals related to COVID-19; and Hospital employee sick pay.
- Health care providers wanting to help address health human resources disruptions related to the pandemic can register at onhealthworkforcematching.ca
- Thousands of regulated and unregulated health professionals have already registered to be deployed to address coverage gaps.
- Working with the Ministry of Health, registrants are also being validated through their respective regulatory colleges to reduce credentialing burden on employers.

Supply Chain: PPE, Ventilators, etc.

- Supporting the province’s extensive efforts to secure supplies and equipment, mission critical is ensuring sufficient supply of personal protective equipment for health care workers, ventilators for patients and other critical medical supplies and equipment.
- Supply chain strategy is to collect and analyze real-time data to procure and distribute supplies as best we can, matched to accelerating needs.
- Guidance and ethical frameworks detail proper use of PPE, N95 masks and surgical/procedures masks to protect health care workers and conserve supply based on scientific and clinical evidence.

Testing

- The Diagnostics Network Operations Testing Centre is streamlining processes with testing labs to clear backlog, improve turnaround and get more results faster.
- Scaling up to test 15,000+ a day soon this month.
- Supported the Ministry of Health in the creation of an online portal for patients to access their lab test results.

- Current work is focused on updating provincial testing strategies, including the re-confirming of priority populations.

Cancer Care

- A cancer care pandemic plan has been circulated detailing how cancer centres can triage cancer surgeries, along with a *COVID-19 Supplemental Clinical Guidance for Patients with Cancer*.
- On a case-by-case basis, cancer surgeries continue for patients whose lives are in immediate threat, or whose prognosis would be significantly impacted by any delay.
- Routine cancer screenings have been deferred; primary care providers have been informed.
- Also provided: *Palliative Care Resources to Support Frontline Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

Chronic Kidney Disease

- A chronic kidney disease pandemic plan has been circulated, along with a *COVID-19 Supplemental Clinical Guidance for Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease*.

Virtual Care

- Significant uptake of virtual care since the release and promotion of the new billing codes.
- Ontario's Virtual Care Clinic launched in partnership with the Ontario Medical Association and OntarioMD to support primary care referrals from Telehealth Ontario. Direct-to-patient video visits have spiked.
- Funding is available for provincial and regional virtual care initiatives. Ontario Health, through the five Regional Digital leads, is reviewing proposals for short-term (six month) virtual care solutions that can be activated immediately regionally, and that have potential for broader provincial application.
- Four proposals have been approved in the areas of using virtual care solutions that facilitate virtual nursing (COVID-19) assessments, COVID-related follow-up assessments with primary care providers and other physicians, and virtual visits with LTC home residents.

Communications

- Health System Response Communications table includes hospital and system / community communications representatives from each region.
- Working with Ontario Health and ministry communications teams to develop and distribute materials and respond to media. Also drawing on responses from the system.

I'll provide you with other updates soon, including how we can provide access to the materials we've created, in addition to the proactive distributions we have already done and continue to do. Thanks again for your commitment as we all tackle an unprecedented situation.

Be well!

Matt