



# Ontario Health

To: Health System Partners  
From: Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health  
SUBJECT: June 22, 2020 -- Update #5: Health System COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Working with the Ministry of Health and partners across the health care sector, we have made strides in responding to COVID-19. As we all continue to work together, several challenges remain:

- Supporting seniors in long-term care
- Achieving a sustained reduction in case count province-wide
- Expanding testing capacity to include many more Ontarians
- Resuming scheduled care in hospitals and other health care settings
- Securing access to PPE, in particular N95 respirators

This update provides a snapshot of what's new in advancing these areas.

## **Long-Term Care**

Ontario Health Regions continue to work across the province to provide comprehensive support to long-term care homes to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and stabilize care for residents by:

- Identifying hospital partners for long-term care homes.
- Supporting critical staffing to help care for residents, including deploying Ontario Health / LHIN staff while seeking other staffing arrangements.
- Providing infection prevention and control through:
  - Assessment
  - Training, including PPE procedures
  - Environmental cleaning support

## **Testing, Surveillance and Outbreak Management**

- We are helping to bring the case count down by conducting analytics and daily monitoring / reporting to support rapid and proactive response, and by supporting the Province's comprehensive testing strategy and the actions needed based on what we learn.
- For example, a comprehensive outreach model for congregate care settings includes testing and supporting onsite isolation where there are outbreaks and referrals to recovery isolation sites.
- On testing, Ontario now has the most expansive guidelines in the country.
- The focus is on testing asymptomatic individuals concerned they may have been exposed to the virus.

- Plus, detecting and containing cases by expanding asymptomatic surveillance among our most vulnerable populations, as well as workplaces in priority sectors where it may be difficult to physically distance.
- Dr. Dirk Huyer is providing executive leadership for the surveillance approach across the system. Dr. Huyer is the Chief Coroner for Ontario.
- Dr. Vanessa Allen, who has been cross-appointed to Ontario Health while also maintaining her position at Public Health Ontario as Chief, Medical Microbiology, is the Medical Director of the Ontario Health COVID-19 Diagnostics Network of 20+ labs across the province.
- A great deal of work is underway to continue to optimize testing, lab processes, and capacity, and to improve turnaround times and effectiveness.
- We are also supporting assessment centres that rapidly sprang into action at the beginning of the pandemic and have become integral to achieving the Province's testing goals.
- To support their incredible response, we recently shared [recommendations](#) to help optimize standards as they continue to meet emerging needs.

#### **Resuming Scheduled Care**

- The Province has given hospitals and other health care providers the green light to gradually resume scheduled care.
- Paramount is the need for hospitals to still keep space and staff ready in case there is a new surge in COVID-19 patients.
- Hospitals and their COVID-19 Regional Response Table are figuring out where, when and how scheduled care can safely resume in their local communities. The resumption is gradual and varies from region to region, depending on the local situation.
- Updates to recommendations for introducing scheduled surgical and procedural work were recently shared with hospitals. They also are posted on our [website](#). To help support the resumption of scheduled care, we also created [a placemat](#) of virtual tools for the pre- and post-surgical journey for patients. It includes platforms for:
  - Home video visits for pre-op assessments, instructions and patient education
  - Early discharge with remote management and virtual follow-up
  - Post-op care and rehab
- And, we shared [recommendations](#) with hospitals about their use of multi-bed wards.
- Plus, we, recently shared [recommendations](#) to help primary, ambulatory, and home care providers in their planning to resume their services.

#### **Supply Chain: Optimizing PPE**

- A critical next step in optimizing PPE is to reprocess used N95 respirators that have been collected and safely stored for the past several weeks.
- Health Canada has [assured](#) Canadians that N95 respirators can be safely reprocessed.
- We are working with these , five hospitals across Ontario (Kingston Health Sciences Centre; Sault Area Hospital; Scarborough Health Network; St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and University Health Network)with excess reprocessing capacity to begin sterilizing used N95s for the Province in the event they are ever needed.
- Reprocessed N95s will be stored in the provincial pandemic supply. Until that time, hospitals are not to introduce the use of reprocessed N95s.

- Pursuant to Directive #5, the Ministry of Health will provide direction on their use - in the event of a severe shortage and in consultation with affected employers and labour unions.
- To learn more, see these [frequently asked questions](#).
- We also are creating a reprocessing community of practice to support staff training, best practices, standards, and quality.

I will continue to update you on key steps forward on these items and others. Thank you for all you are doing to respond to COVID-19!

I also wanted to end by acknowledging recent tragic events and to share a note that was circulated [with our staff](#). Ontario Health is committed to fighting racism and inequity.

To address it head-on, we are actively reviewing all of our health equity assets across our young agency and all of its entities to quickly create an integrated action plan for the entire organization, and in consultation with patients, families and our team. This plan will include supporting the enhancement of provincial data platforms, advancing health equity, inclusion and anti-racism through our recruitment processes and our executive team's goals, and in our work as we prepare for another wave of COVID-19. Like millions of others, we condemn anti-Black racism in all of its forms and are committed to leading the kind of change that is necessary in our organization and across the communities we serve.

Matthew Anderson