



Date: April 27, 2020

Subject: Ontario Hospitals Supporting Long-Term Care

I am writing to follow up on the email I sent you on April 17th about the situation in long-term care. Yesterday, the Health Minister issued an Emergency Order for hospitals to assign some of their staff to provide services and supports within long-term care homes. This is in response to the spread of COVID-19 within these homes, which poses a significant threat not only to the health of some of our most vulnerable citizens, but also to the overall system itself.

We are asking you, on behalf of your team at your hospital to work with your Regional Lead/Regional Planning table to agree upon your congregate care strategies. With your help, we hope to change the trajectory of COVID-19 in our long-term care homes and other congregate care settings.

Given this, it is recommended that hospitals not begin ramping up scheduled care. On March 15th, hospitals had to significantly decrease scheduled care out of concern that our health system could be overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases. It was a necessary precaution in the face of a serious risk, and that risk remains. While community spread has been held steady, the situation in long-term care and other congregate settings is concerning and continues to pose a significant concern to the broader health system, including hospitals. Until the threat to our seniors and our health system has diminished, we must continue to use our resources for urgent and emergent cases.

As some of you may be aware, a planning table hosted by Ontario Health has been developing recommendations for a measured approach to expanding scheduled care. We are looking to release these recommendations when the concern level for the overall health system has lowered. We will revisit releasing the recommendations on a weekly basis. In the meantime, we need hospitals and your clinicians to continue doing what they have done so well over the past six weeks, which is to triage on a case-by-case basis to determine who needs immediate care, and who can be asked to wait.

From the very beginning of this COVID-19 journey, Ontario hospitals have stepped up every single time they have been asked. I don't have the slightest doubt that you will do so again, as many have already done. The entire system is grateful for the commitment our hospitals have shown, and the skills they bring to bear.