

## Another Message to Our Community About COVID-19

Since the end of March, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare's emergency planning has continued to evolve to a greater level of preparedness for an influx of patients from COVID-19. Like every Ontario hospital, MAHC will struggle with the patient surge that is anticipated still to come. We have limited personnel and limited space, and health care practitioners fill many roles in our communities. With the potential impact of community spread and greater prevalence of COVID-19 in Muskoka, MAHC has done a lot of work to put in place additional measures at both hospitals, including:

- Ensuring robust infection control isolation precautions are practiced diligently everywhere, at all times. Regardless of where potential or confirmed COVID-19 patients are, these practices are in place to protect against cross-contamination of any infection.
- Ensuring we follow guidelines for mask use and other personal protective equipment to reduce the risk of potential transmission from anyone who could be carrying the virus but does not show symptoms, while continuing to monitor and react to a provincially-challenged supply chain. If you have PPE to donate, please visit our website for information about our community donation process.
- Continuing to work closely with our partners and Home and Community Care to move patients to appropriate environments to reduce the number of admitted patients in each of our sites. By also moving quickly on difficult decisions to cancel elective surgeries, we have been able to free up hospital beds should the wave come. In the days ahead, our Operating Rooms will be used for emergency surgeries only as we continue to align with updated provincial direction to ramp down services even more.
- Finalizing our pandemic plan for a surge in critical care needs. This type of planning guides both mitigation and response and follows a phased approach that looks to maximize capacity at both sites and identify and prepare appropriate spaces to manage COVID patients effectively. Meanwhile in the Emergency Dept., teams are looking at innovative ways to change flow to create separate streams to best serve COVID and non-COVID patient needs to protect the safety of all.
- Modelling optimal care for COVID patients through many clinician-led simulations across both sites. Providers are also exploring virtual care options both in hospital and in community primary care so those who are ill have alternative means to get the care they need without leaving their homes.

Provincial and Ministry directives change rapidly as new information and statistics become available and are reviewed daily by our Pandemic Command Team. Our staff and physicians remain committed to COVID containment and compassionate care, and I am so grateful every day for their courage and their hard work during these very difficult and often stressful times. On their behalf, I would also like to thank:

- those in our communities who have donated masks, gowns and gloves, and hand sanitizer as well as offered financial support through donations, dropped off tokens of appreciation, sent messages, and wished us well on our social media posts;
- our first responder partners for honouring our teams with recent sirens of support showing solidarity that we are all in this together;
- businesses that have worked with our Huntsville Hospital and South Muskoka Hospital Foundations to provide grab-and-go prepared food for our teams;
- the many other essential workers who also continue to work in pharmacies, grocery stores and take-out food establishments;
- the countless community partners and friends who have offered supplies, accommodations, other assistance and support;
- donors who continue to support and believe in our hospitals;
- and everyone who keeps us in their thoughts and prayers. This is the true meaning of community, and together, we will get through this.

Please rest assured your Muskoka hospitals are committed to acting in the best interests of preparedness for our greater communities. Our teams are doing everything they can to provide excellent care for patients with medical needs unrelated to COVID-19, while responding with a dynamic pandemic plan. We know this will be a long haul that will persist for weeks to months, but we also know someday this will be over. Take care of yourselves and your families. Clean your hands frequently and be diligent in physical distancing, which is critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19. Stay healthy and stay safe.

MORE INFORMATION AT [www.mahc.ca/COVID-19/](http://www.mahc.ca/COVID-19/)

*Natalie Bubela, Chief Executive Officer, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare*