

MEDIA STATEMENT**Ontario Hospitals to Maintain Measures to Protect Patient Safety**

Toronto, ON, March 9, 2022 – “As the Government of Ontario proceeds with its plan to lift remaining COVID-19 directives, hospitals will be adopting and implementing certain protective measures, including requirements related to personal protective equipment and health care worker vaccination, into their own health and safety policies and procedures.

Hospitals are committed to protecting patients, staff and visitors, and ensuring safety is a top priority. The hospital sector routinely establishes policies and requirements regarding infection prevention and control, personal protective equipment, and health care worker vaccination. Now, as the directives from the Chief Medical Officer of Health are lifted, hospitals will be incorporating various measures independently to ensure the safest environment possible.

In general, Ontario hospitals have already implemented additional vaccination requirements within their organizations beyond the scope of the provincial directive, and many hospitals have also now implemented COVID-19 vaccination requirements for new hires and staff appointments. Health care workers within Ontario’s hospitals are already required to show evidence of immunity for many communicable diseases, such as measles, rubella, varicella, and tuberculosis, at the time of hire – and there is no reason to treat the COVID-19 vaccine any differently.

While overall, hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care units have dropped significantly in recent weeks the pandemic is not yet over. Northern and parts of eastern Ontario continue to experience high levels of community spread placing significant pressure on local and regional hospitals. Ontario’s health care system is still experiencing high levels of occupancy – even with additional capacity funded by the province – and COVID-19 remains a volatile and unpredictable disease.

The decision to lift masking requirements later this month for the public is a judgment call. Given the risks and uncertainties from COVID-19, particularly for vulnerable populations such as the unvaccinated and immunocompromised, responsibility for any consequences from this decision rests with the Government of Ontario. Ontarians can expect that masking will be required within hospital settings for some time as a patient safety measure.

Hospitals have a duty to do everything they can to keep patients safe and the OHA will continue to support and serve its members during this historic time.”

- Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association

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