

Ministry of Health

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February 12, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Presidents and Chief Executive Officers of Community Laboratory Corporations and
Hospital Corporations
Designated Correspondents of Licensed Laboratories
Ontario Hospital Association
Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories

FROM: Dr. David Williams, BSc., MD, MHSc, FRCPS
Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario

RE: COORDINATION OF LABORATORY TESTING FOR THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

As you are aware, the World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. As we monitor the emergence of this new virus, our focus in Ontario has been on early case identification and containment.

We have been working closely with Public Health Ontario (PHO), who has been the central point for testing at this stage, to ensure that we also have effective processes to coordinate activity around any initial cases, including communication and reporting to the public. For more information, please refer to [PHO's Test Information Sheet](#) or call PHO's Customer Service Centre at 416-235-6556 or 1-877-604-4567.

We have received inquiries in recent weeks regarding a number of hospital laboratories that would like to offer testing to patients of concern at this stage. We have also been asked about contingency planning, and whether select laboratories can take steps to prepare so that they can ramp up their testing capacity in support of a provincial response should it be needed.

At the present time, the current testing activity is low and well within the capacity of Public Health Ontario to turn results around quickly. However, I would like to initiate discussions with interested laboratories to ensure that we have a coordinated approach to testing, the reporting and communication of results and to contingency planning for future capacity.

I would like to ask interested laboratories to email the Ministry's Emergency Operations Centre at eocoperations.moh@ontario.ca. We will then work to set up future discussions with you on a coordinated process.

Thank you for your support as we respond to this emerging virus and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



David C. Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

c: Helen Angus, Deputy Minister of Health, Ontario
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
Clint Shingler, Director, Health System Emergency Management Branch, Ministry of Health
Patrick Dicerni, Assistant Deputy Minister and General Manager, Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), Ministry of Health
Neeta Sarta, Director, Laboratories and Genetics Branch, Ministry of Health
Mike Heenan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Hospitals and Capital, Ministry of Health
Sean Court, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Transformation, Ministry of Health
Dr. Peter Donnelly, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario
Dr. Vanessa Allen, Chief Medical Microbiology, Public Health Ontario Laboratory