

MEDIA STATEMENT**Extraordinary Response Required to Protect Critical Care for Ontarians**

Toronto, ON, April 9, 2021 – “The third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to create extremely serious conditions in Ontario’s hospitals, driven by more dangerous and transmissible variants. Hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care units (ICUs) are increasing rapidly. Today, there are 541 adult patients in ICUs with COVID related critical illness, on a total bed census of 1,869, with 54 admissions just yesterday. These patients are younger, sicker and require more resources to treat than those during the first or second waves. The anticipated worst-case scenario is 3,000 COVID-19 inpatients hospitalized and nearly 1,000 in ICU by April 30.

This extraordinary situation requires an extraordinary response. Today, the government issued an emergency order to enable the redeployment of health care professionals and other workers currently working in Ontario Health and Home and Community Care Support Services organizations to hospitals. It also issued an order to allow hospitals to transfer patients to alternate hospital sites when their own resources are at risk of becoming overwhelmed. Yesterday, hospitals were directed to ramp down all elective surgeries and non-urgent activities as of April 12, and, if necessary, they may also be asked to redeploy staff and resources to areas of the province facing a surge of COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization.

Unfortunately, the impact of the third wave extends far beyond those who fall ill with COVID-19. Ramping down elective surgeries will have a significant long-term impact on thousands of patients waiting for care, as elective surgeries include life-saving surgeries and those that dramatically enhance quality of life. These are not trade-offs any of us wanted to make, but they are necessary now to save lives.

As they grapple with this historic crisis and make ensuring equitable access to critical care services their top priority, Ontario’s hospitals request patience and understanding from the public in the weeks ahead. Every Ontarian must also do their part by complying with the province’s stay-at-home order and public health guidance, and by receiving their vaccination when their turn comes. Only together can we protect ourselves, our loved ones, and the dedicated health care workers fighting the virus on the frontlines.”

- Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association

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