

*News Release***Ontario Takes Extraordinary Steps to Ensure Health Care Resources are Available to Contain COVID-19**

March 21, 2020

TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government announced a new order under the March 17, 2020 declaration of emergency to ensure health care resources are available to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep individuals and families safe. This temporary order would give hospitals the ability to cancel and postpone services to free-up space and valuable staff, identify staffing priorities, and develop, modify and implement redeployment plans.

"On the best advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and in response to clear and urgent requests from our frontline health service providers, the province is taking decisive action to ensure we can continue to be responsive and nimble as the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases grows," said Sylvia Jones, Solicitor General. "While normal protocols are important in routine times, these extraordinary steps will ensure our health sector workers are there, where and when they are needed, to care for Ontarians and support our extensive efforts to contain this virus."

Under this temporary order hospitals will be able to respond to, prevent and alleviate an outbreak of COVID-19 by carrying out measures such as:

- Redeploying staff within different locations in (or between) facilities of the hospital;
- Redeploying staff to work in COVID-19 assessment centres;
- Changing the assignment of work, including assigning non-bargaining unit employees or contractors to perform bargaining unit work;
- Changing the scheduling of work or shift assignments;
- Deferring or cancelling vacations, absences or other leaves, regardless of whether such vacations, absences or leaves are established by statute, regulation, agreement or otherwise;
- Employing extra part-time or temporary staff or contractors, including for the purpose of performing bargaining unit work;
- Using volunteers to perform work, including to perform bargaining work; and

- Providing appropriate training or education as needed to staff and volunteers to achieve the purposes of a redeployment plan.

When utilized by hospitals, these redeployment plans temporarily supersede the provisions of a collective agreement, including lay-off, seniority/service or bumping provisions. For example, currently a hospital would be required to post a lay-off notice and wait a period of time before being able to move a nurse or other unionized employee from an emergency department to a COVID-19 assessment centre. These measures would allow for the redeployment of staff to address the containment of COVID-19 without restriction or delay.

"I want to once again thank our nurses, doctors and frontline care workers for their extraordinary dedication and commitment as we continue to work together to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "These temporary measures are necessary to ensure hospitals are able to effectively deploy personnel to where help and support is needed most in their facilities."

This time-limited order is valid for 14 days unless revoked or renewed in accordance with the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.

## **QUICK FACTS**

- Ontarians should be practising social distancing to reduce their exposure to other people. Avoid close contact (within 2 metres) with people outside of your immediate families.
- If you are returning from travel outside of Canada or if you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms, you should begin to [self-monitor](#) for a period of 14 days, including social distancing and tracking your symptoms and how you feel.