

March 25, 2020

Letter to our Stakeholders

Re: Expanding Capacity for COVID-19

The Saskatchewan Health Authority is expanding capacity to meet demand for future phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is one part of the SHA's overall strategy to contain, delay and mitigate COVID-19.

Based on what we know from other jurisdictions, it is critical we act immediately to expand acute care capacity to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

In all planning scenarios, demand for acute medical services will exceed existing capacity for hospital beds, Intensive Care Unit beds, ventilators as well as creating a significant burden on other acute services, supports, human resources, supplies, and equipment.

All jurisdictions are facing this challenge. We are not alone.

In response to this demand, exceptional measures are required.

Modelling from other jurisdictions suggests that this virus may affect 30% of the population and result in thousands needing hospitalization over many months. It is these worst case scenarios we are preparing for. This conceptual modelling is being updated to ensure it is more specific to the situation in Saskatchewan, but it is critical under any scenario that we continue to act to escalate our tactics to meet the potential demand.

We have already initiated measures to ensure we can meet this demand. A province wide slowdown of non-essential or non-urgent services to increase bed availability, preserve supplies, and support our staff is already underway.

Our leadership is also activating plans to create additional capacity through:

- Creation of dedicated spaces to cohort COVID-19 patients within facilities.
- Creation of COVID-19 designated hospitals in Saskatoon and Regina and other areas of the province, where required.
- Creation of additional community based acute care capacity where required (e.g. field hospitals in school gyms, community centres, rinks, etc.)

This plan is critical to meet the projected COVID-19 patient demand while continuing to deliver acute services to non-pandemic patients.

Changes to services and service locations are already occurring and will be ongoing as we adapt to the increased capacity it will take for the health system to effectively manage the weeks and months ahead. Communities will be updated as changes occur in their areas.

This plan will ensure we are prepared. But it won't be enough.

No health system in the world can flatten the curve on the growth of COVID-19 without the sustained help of the general public:

- We need everyone to practice good hygiene and wash their hands regularly and be diligent about it.
- We must practice social distancing (two meters apart whenever and wherever possible) and ensure we are taking efforts today to avoid gathering with those outside our immediate home;
- We need people to follow the travel and self-isolation restrictions;
- We need health care providers to use our supplies effectively and efficiently, so that they are available when needed;
- We need people to continue to avoid visiting our hospitals and long-term care facilities unless there are compassionate reasons for doing so;
- We need you to ensure everyone in your life is following the measures, and we are supporting each other to contain this virus.
- Only together will we protect each other and minimize the severity of illness and loss of life.

We are asking three things of you to support this strategy:

- Communicate to your residents and stakeholders about the key points made above and share key information from saskatchewan.ca/COVID19 about what they can do to prevent further spread of COVID-19;
- If one of our officials contacts your organization about identifying community space to address our capacity needs or any other matter related to COVID-19, please work with them. Your help will save lives;
- Continue your leadership supporting the people of Saskatchewan during this challenging time.

A provincial Emergency Operations Centre has been established, as well as Integrated Health Incident Command Centres (IHICCs) for each of the SHA service areas (Saskatoon, Regina, Rural and North). It is the local IHICC's that will be accountable for finalizing and deploying these continuity of services and surge capacity plans on a local level.

Our local Integrated Health Incident Command Centres (IHICCs) can be reached with urgent area inquiries:

- North: IHICC-North@saskhealthauthority.ca
- Rural: IHICC-Rural@saskhealthauthority.ca
- Saskatoon: IHICC-Saskatoon@saskhealthauthority.ca
- Regina: IHICC-Regina@saskhealthauthority.ca

All up-to-date public information on the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan can be accessed at saskatchewan.ca/COVID19. Inquiries of a general nature about COVID-19 can be directed to COVID19@health.gov.sk.ca.

Thank you for all you are doing to help us. I am confident in your leadership and our ability to collaborate during this challenging time to ensure Saskatchewan residents are supported as best we can to fight the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Scott W. Livingstone
Chief Executive Officer
Saskatchewan Health Authority

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

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