



May 22, 2020

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

This past week marked an important milestone in our COVID-19 experience as many people were able to enjoy some of the simple pleasures of spring such as golfing and hiking in Durham's scenic conservation areas, while managing the risks posed by this new virus.

Overall, Durham Region and Ontario have been spared the extreme impacts of COVID-19 that have been experienced in other parts of the world. The clear exception is the devastating outbreaks in long-term care (LTC) and retirement homes, including those in our own community. The community-wide effort to support the residents and staff in these homes is demonstrating success with a number of LTC homes declaring the end of outbreaks in recent weeks. But, there is still much work ahead.



The pandemic's impact on Durham Region and Lakeridge Health

Of the 1,318 cases in Durham Region (as of May 22), 988 are now resolved and there has been a steady reduction in new cases over the last month. These numbers tell us we are moving in a positive direction. However, all of us would like to see the cases dropping faster. Further, this week we saw a small uptick in new daily cases, reminding us all of the need for continued vigilance. Visit Durham Region Health Department's COVID-19 website for current data on COVID-19 in Durham Region <https://www.durham.ca>.

More than anything else, successes to date are a result of the community's collective commitment to stop the spread. People are practicing physical distancing – despite the personal cost of being separated from loved ones. Many community members are staying home as much as possible and being diligent about handwashing and the other precautions that keep us safe.

To date, Lakeridge Health has not seen a significant spike in COVID-19 admissions. Over the last month, between 20 and 40 patients with COVID-19 have been hospitalized at Lakeridge Health on any given day. Almost all of these patients received care in our specialized COVID-19 units, with some needing the highly specialized care provided in our Intensive Care Units.

For all of us in the hospital system, some of the most meaningful days are when our patients are well enough to go home, and this has been especially so for people with COVID-19. Over the past few months, 119 people with COVID-19 have been discharged home after having a hospital stay.

As the cases continue to trend lower, our hospitals have greater capacity to serve our community – capacity that will allow us to reschedule elective surgeries and welcome patients back to our outpatient clinics and community programs.

The pandemic is anticipated to last many more months and there will most likely be new waves of infection.

Lakeridge Health is ready.

Our team has developed a “surge” plan to rapidly expand our space, increase staffing, safeguard our personal protective equipment, and potentially add hundreds of beds should the need arise.

Update on plans to resume surgeries and procedures

Lakeridge Health is in the midst of preparing to resume elective surgeries and procedures, many of which have been deferred for over two months. This plan is being closely coordinated with our regional partners including home and community care and primary care to ensure the resources are in place to support patients before, during and after surgery.

Also, over the coming weeks, Durham Region will ramp up testing for anyone with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 – even mild symptoms. Please contact your physician or fill out the COVID-19 Assessment form on Lakeridge Health’s website to arrange an assessment.

Everyone has a part in beating COVID-19

If we all continue to make these difficult sacrifices, we can protect family members, friends and neighbours from this serious virus. Furthermore, our collective resolve to do our part will control the spread of COVID-19 and enable the economy to reopen.

There are many ways to help. To make a financial donation to the *Durham Fights COVID-19* campaign go to www.durhamfightscovid19.ca. So far, nearly \$850,000 has been donated to our local hospitals for resources to improve the patient experience, medical equipment and care items for our teams.

Thank you for your unfailing support and encouragement of our amazing team. We are all incredibly grateful!

And thank you for helping to keep Durham Region healthy and safe! Don’t forget, it’s perfectly safe to go outside and enjoy the nice weather when you’re practicing social distancing.

Wishing you good health,

Susan deRyk
Interim President and CEO

Tony Stone
Chief of Staff