

February 24, 2021

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Long-Term Care Home Licensees  
**FROM:** Erin Hannah  
Associate Deputy Minister  
**SUBJECT:** **Updates and Resources**

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I am thrilled to be writing to you today to confirm next steps in the provincial vaccine roll out. I also wanted to take this opportunity to share a new development regarding N95 respirators, highlight a new support for proof of negative rapid antigen testing, and ask for your help in making sure caregivers are offered flexibility and that we have the most up to date information on the implementation of 3<sup>rd</sup> party screening oversight.

### Vaccine Update

As you know, in mid-February, Ontario reached all LTC homes across the province with a first dose offer for residents. Now, with the vaccine supply the Province is anticipating over the next few weeks, we can resume first dose offers to LTC staff and caregivers. We hope that together we can promote the greatest degree of uptake possible through strong communication efforts and collaboration with partners on the ground, and we plan to release a toolkit later this week that you may find helpful in engaging your teams and the family members in your home community.

To help in your planning with your local Public Health Unit, please keep the following in mind:

- In addition to resuming first dose offers to LTC staff and caregivers, homes should also look to offer the vaccine to any residents who may not have received previously (for example, if someone changed their mind) and plans for ensuring a vaccine is offered to new residents entering the home.
- While we want to encourage the greatest uptake possible, vaccination remains a voluntary choice and residents cannot be required to have a first or second vaccine dose to be (re)admitted to a home.

- To ensure equity and integrity in vaccine delivery, Public Health Units and vaccination clinics should implement processes to fill last-minute cancellations, “no-shows” and end-of-day remaining doses with people who are in groups identified as immediate and next priority for vaccination, and only to Phase One priority populations. A full list of Phase One priority populations can be found [here](#).
- The public health guidance remains the same in respect of dose intervals (i.e., LTC residents should receive the second dose of the PfizerBioNTech vaccine 21 to 27 days after their first dose, and the second dose of the Moderna COVID-19 28 days after the administration of their first dose). Where necessary due to operational or logistical constraints, it is clinically acceptable to give the second dose of the Moderna vaccine up to 42 days after the first dose.

### N95s

As you may know, the Province has been working on supporting a consistent supply of high quality personal protective equipment through domestic production. As part of this domestic production strategy, the government has made a five-year commitment to purchase a large annual quantity of the NIOSH-certified N95 1870+ model from a new 3M production line in Brockville, Ontario starting in April 2021. This supply will support all the needs of the Ontario Public Service and Ontario health care sector employees, including LTC homes.

The 1870+ model is fluid resistant and expected to fit-test a majority of users. Based on historical usage and clinical feedback we expect this model to be preferred by most clinicians. The Province will start with the distribution of 1870+ models beginning April 1, 2021 to allow for immediate fit testing and use. More information will be provided in the coming weeks about how homes can access this supply.

### Caregiver Support

Over the past several weeks I have heard from many family caregivers whose resilience and desire to support the best quality of life and care mirrors that of each of you and your teams. Some of the concerns I have heard relate to access and to limits on how they can support their loved ones within the home. I kindly request that all homes continue to exercise the greatest degree of flexibility in caregiver access to their loved ones per the existing policy underpinned by principles such as safety and emotional well being and considering factors like the type of direct support a caregiver is providing, the areas of the home most appropriate to providing that care, and the needs of the resident.

### Proof of Negative Rapid Antigen Testing

Based on feedback, we have created an optional template for homes who wish to provide support workers and visitors with proof that the person has received a negative antigen screening result at their home on a specific day. The completed form can be used by the support worker or visitor attending to other homes in the same day without the requirement of a second rapid antigen test (i.e., by either presenting the completed form or showing a photo).

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Oversight

Over the past several weeks, and in response to feedback received from our partners, we have evolved the direction on 3<sup>rd</sup> party screening oversight in line with the shared goal of protecting homes to the greatest degree possible. Thank you for your efforts in ensuring this neutral oversight is in place through various approaches including dedicated hires and vendor partnerships. I would ask that you be sure to reflect your efforts in the weekly self-reporting on testing and screening (i.e., yes or no implementation question) so we have the most current achievement to share in our own internal updates to decision makers.

Finally, for your information, we are also attaching a memo from the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development highlighting workplace guidance and resources. While not specific to the LTC sector, we are sharing in the event that you may find some of these resources helpful.

In closing, please accept our appreciation again for your continued commitment in keeping our most vulnerable Ontarians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

Erin Hannah

Attachments:

- Template - Proof of Negative COVID-19 Antigen Test
- MLTSD DM Memo: New and Updated COVID Resources

c: Richard Steele, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)  
Sheila Bristo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations Division, MLTC  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery  
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Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario  
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Colleen Geiger, President and CEO (Acting), Public Health Ontario  
Renee Mahalanobis, Director, Long-Term Care Projects and Stabilization, MLTC