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From the Office of Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health, Southwestern Public Health

Update about Regional Prioritization of COVID-19 Vaccines

Dear Hospital Colleague:

We write today with an update on the current prioritization strategy for distribution of the limited supply of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA vaccine.

Provincial prioritization of the COVID-19 Vaccine (Phase 1)

The Ontario Ministry of Health, through the guidance of the provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force led by General Rick Hillier, directs the allocation of the vaccine. Given scarce vaccine supply, a regional COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Advisory Committee has been struck to help inform the public health units decisions regarding further prioritization when necessary.

At this time, the General has indicated that all first doses must be prioritized for long-term care and high-risk retirement home residents, staff, and essential caregivers.

At the Western Fair Agriplex Clinic:

- Long-Term Care Home staff
- LHIN, Hospital, Primary Care and Paramedic Services staff who are directly providing on-site support to long-term care and retirement homes in outbreak, and have committed to a week or more of attending the facility
- Retirement home staff
- Immunizers of the COVID-19 vaccine (immunizers are vaccinated to limit the potential for transmission between facilities)
- Individuals who have previously booked appointments

Through mobile clinics:

- Long-term care home residents

- High-risk retirement homes co-located with long-term care homes, and those with a memory unit

No other groups are currently eligible for the vaccine in this region.

Update on Local Rollout of the COVID-19 Vaccine

The provincial goal is to vaccinate all long-term care home and high-risk retirement home residents by February 15, 2021; this has resulted in the need to further prioritize access to the vaccine at this time. Approximately 75% of all COVID-19 deaths in Ontario are among residents of long-term care and retirement homes, highlighting the urgent need to vaccinate this population.

We are thrilled to inform you that the SWPH region is on target to meet or exceed this goal. 340 residents at Maple Manor Tillsonburg, PeopleCare Tavistock, Extencicare Port Stanley, Caessant Care Bonnie Place St. Thomas and Woodingford Lodge Woodstock were vaccinated this week.

Update on Immunization of Hospital Staff at the LHSC Western Fair District Agriplex Clinic

Given the need to prioritize doses for long-term care home residents, staff bookings at the Agriplex are temporarily paused. Previously booked appointments and second dose appointments will continue as scheduled. The opportunity to book an appointment will be expanded when additional vaccine becomes available in the region and we will let you know as soon as the supply has increased.

We recognize that waiting to be vaccinated is not easy, and we understand the disappointment this will create for hospital staff. Thank you for your ongoing support of our community and its most vulnerable residents.

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