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REPORT TITLE: **Regional Role to Support Alternate Care Sites in Peel**

FROM: Nancy Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That efforts underway to work collaboratively with local community and health sector partners in the planning and development of temporary alternate care sites, as needed, in preparation for the predicted surge of COVID-19 patients in Peel, be endorsed;**

**And further, that the Interim Chief Administrative Officer for the Regional Municipality of Peel be authorized to direct, through the Regional Emergency Operations Centre, staffing and resources within the current Council approved 2020 Operating Budget, as required and available, to assist local community and health sector partners with the development and operations of temporary alternate care sites.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- As community transmission of COVID-19 in Peel increases, and based on current modelling, local area hospitals and community partners are preparing to respond to a surge of patients.
- In response to this, the provincial government has released *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19* with specific investments to assist hospital and other community partners in responding to surge capacity pressures.
- Locally, hospital partners in Peel have announced plans to develop temporary alternate care sites to respond to capacity challenges.
- While details on surge capacity planning continue to evolve, the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) has been working with community partners to identify needs and opportunities to provide a coordinated Regional response.
- In anticipation of supports required to plan, develop and operationalize temporary alternate care sites, several key roles have been identified where the Region has the expertise to offer support, if capacity is available.
- Coordinated through the REOC, these roles will be balanced with internal needs to maintain the Region's core business functions and staff capacity at the forefront, while also supporting emerging community needs.

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## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Background**

With both a confirmed increase in community transmission of COVID-19 in Peel and projected trends gathered through predictive analytics, local area hospitals are expecting to see a surge in patients with severe symptoms requiring intensive care based on observed admission rates. Hospitals are seeking to maximize their capacity to care for COVID-19 patients by adding beds and associated equipment and staffing, while minimizing exposure

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risks to non-COVID-19 patients, frontline healthcare workers, and other members of the community.

To assist hospitals and other community partners, the provincial government released *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19 (March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update)*, which outlined specific investments to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. More specifically, the Province allocated \$935 million to the hospital sector, including \$594 million to accelerate progress on the government's commitment to address capacity issues. Provincial investments also include \$341 million for an additional 1,000 acute care beds, 500 critical care beds and more assessment centers across the Province.

Further, the Ministry of Health has provided guidance and approvals to public hospitals to use temporary alternate care facilities or sites to provide care to lower acuity patients and minimize transmission of COVID-19. In response, the Ontario Health Central Region (which serves Peel as well as other neighbouring municipalities) has determined that, based on available space, hospitals can add an additional 416 acute care beds, 184 rehabilitation beds and 474 intensive care unit (ICU) beds. Further, the Central Region has estimated that an additional 364 long-term care beds could be created with an additional 69 short-stay beds transitioning to long-term care beds. Locally, William Osler Health System and Trillium Health Partners have projected the need for over 1,000 additional bed spaces across both systems and have announced plans to proceed with the building of temporary modular buildings on hospital grounds.

## 2. Findings

Following the activation of the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) on March 10, 2020, several Regional Task Forces and community response planning tables have been established to support business continuity planning for the delivery of the Region's essential services, while also providing leadership and support to emerging needs from community partners. Through these partnerships, the Region has extended an offer to all three local hospitals (Trillium Health Partners, William Osler Health System, Headwaters Health Care Centre) to discuss what role(s) the Region could support in the planning and operation of temporary alternate care sites.

As community needs evolve, temporary alternate care sites could extend beyond the hospital setting, including addressing surge capacity pressures for individuals living in long-term care homes, homeless shelters or those seeking alternate level of care options (such as those experiencing milder symptoms of non-COVID-19 related health needs).

In addition, discussions with local hospital leadership has considered the potential need to house health care workers at temporary locations to mitigate the risk of transmission to families and provide a place for rest and recuperation, as has been done in other jurisdictions. Similarly, temporary respite or housing options are being developed for consideration to support Regional staff, to minimize risk for transmitting COVID-19 in their homes and community.

Anticipating these pressures, the Region has identified key roles to offer support in the development of temporary alternate care sites across a variety of sectors. These roles, outlined below, have been identified based on asset-mapping of existing skills, resources and expertise of Regional staff. The Region's role builds on recent efforts to establish the Homeless Isolation and Recovery Program in Peel, and the preparedness planning activities completed last summer in support of potentially hosting evacuees from fire-threatened northern Ontario communities.

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Potential roles to support with the development of temporary alternate care sites include:

- along with Ontario Health Central Region, assisting with assessing suitable locations (based on sector-specific needs) and providing assistance with negotiations for occupancy and licensing agreements on behalf of community partners and/or the Province as a tenant;
- assisting with planning new and innovative models of care and facilitating collaboration among partners (including Ontario Central Health Region), building on a broad network of relationships;
- supporting with land use planning, infrastructure development and procurement support in the development of new temporary alternate care sites; and
- leveraging capital planning, asset management, contract development, vendor management and project management experience.

As temporary alternate care sites become fully operationalized, additional roles could include:

- delivering non-urgent transportation services through dedicated TransHelp buses to and from temporary alternate care sites;
- expanding the scope of practice for Peel Paramedics to deliver community paramedicine that could serve as an extension of the Home and Community Care sector in relation to assessment, testing, triage and symptom management; and
- leveraging, where appropriate, volunteer resources through the Region's Volunteer Resources Program, as a talent pool for additional support once redeployment efforts have been exhausted.

These opportunities will be monitored and coordinated through the REOC to ensure the Region's core business functions are maintained while effectively supporting partner organizations in addressing emerging community needs.

## **RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

As a leader in the community, there is an urgency for the Region to work collaboratively with community partners to appropriately plan and coordinate collective action for COVID-19 response in Peel. However, this urgency must be balanced with internal resourcing needs required to deliver essential services to the community, such as Public Health, Long-Term Care, Paramedic Services, Housing and Homelessness Services, Social Assistance, Emergency Child Care, Water and Wastewater Services, Waste Management and others. Efforts to redeploy staff to assist with over-extended program areas has commenced through internal business continuity planning.

Balancing internal needs, such as long-term care, housing programs and shelter services, with broader community needs will be reviewed by the REOC, to ensure the Region's resources are being utilized effectively and efficiently to support the Peel community.

The evolving impacts of the pandemic require all levels of government and all public sector partners to work collectively on innovative and effective solutions, but the impact to Regional services and staff capacity must be continually monitored to avoid over-extension and burnout. Regular communication and engagement of leadership through the REOC provide opportunities to continuously review roles and responsibilities and manage risks.

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At the time this report was written, there has been no request from local hospitals or other community partners for financial support in developing temporary alternate care sites. More appropriately, the Region may have the opportunity to provide support through in-kind staff to plan, develop and operationalize the temporary alternate care sites. As these resources are already part of the current Council approved 2020 Operating Budget, there would be no net financial impact resulting from this support. Additional costs that may be incurred in responding to emerging needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic will be tracked and reported to Council.

### CONCLUSION

Through the REOC, the Region will continue to provide leadership and support to local hospital and community partners in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional staff are well-equipped with skills and expertise to offer additional support, if capacity is available. Ongoing collaboration through the REOC will strengthen a collaborative and collective response for the Peel community in this critical time to respond to predicted surge pressures throughout the community.

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*For further information regarding this report, please contact Brian Laundry, Director, Strategic Policy and Performance, Ext. 2514, [Brian.Laundry@peelregion.ca](mailto:Brian.Laundry@peelregion.ca).*

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### ***Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:***

Department Commissioner, Division Director, Financial Support Unit and Legal Services.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



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