

Niagara Health President: “We will get through this together”



BY LYNN GUERRIERO

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Lynn Guerriero, President of Niagara Health. Supplied photo, Niagara Health.

We find ourselves in an unprecedented time with the COVID-19 pandemic. It has dramatically altered our lives as we know them. I have never been more proud to work with such a committed group of people and more grateful to live in such a caring and generous community.

At Niagara Health, we are all working our hardest to provide the best and safest care to our patients. We could not have a better team in place – their professionalism and dedication are beyond measure.

To our Niagara community – your words of support and donations of everything from flowers and pizza to first-responder tribute parades and personal protective equipment mean so much to us and have made it very clear that we will get through these difficult times by supporting each other.

At this point in our COVID-19 planning, our Emergency Operations Centre continues to meet daily to plan and take action to meet the rapidly changing demands of the pandemic.

We’ve implemented a no-visitor policy and postponed a number of services and procedures for safety reasons and to reduce occupancy in our hospital sites. As the number of COVID-19 patients continues to rise in Niagara, we must continue to take decisive action to build additional capacity in a safe and controlled manner.

The St. Catharines Site has been designated for our COVID-19 patients. We have created a COVID-19 unit with dedicated staff and we have beds ready to open in St. Catharines to receive a potential influx of patients. Work to transfer patients from St. Catharines to the Greater Niagara General and Welland sites is underway. Those who can be safely discharged will be, at the earliest opportunity, with any appropriate home care and community supports in place. We are also securing space at a local hotel that, if needed, could be used for non-COVID-19 patients who are stable and do not require the intensity of hospital-based services. This would allow us to focus on critical and medical care at our St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland sites.

We appreciate that there is a lot of change taking place, at a rapid pace, and that this change can be difficult for our patients and their loved ones. None of our decisions are being made lightly. They are taking place in consultation with Niagara Health experts, as well as with regional, provincial and federal partners – always with the best interests of our patients and families, staff and physicians, in mind.

COVID-19 has impacted people in varying ways and led us to find new ways to connect with those close to us. While the holidays are normally a time to get together with family, friends and loved ones, our world continues to be in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether you celebrate these holidays or not, remember to follow public health measures by avoiding gatherings, staying home as much as possible, practicing physical distancing and regularly washing your hands.

Thank you again for your ongoing support of Niagara Health. We are here for you, and we will get through this together.

Lynn Guerriero is the President of Niagara Health.