**Tuesday, March 17, 2020**

The COVID-19 Assessment Centre opened today. The Assessment Centre is available only to those who have been directed there by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) or Telehealth. The need to perform COVID-19 swab testing will be determined by strict medical directives.

Planning has begun for careful ramp down of non-essential services, as per the Ministry of Health recommendation. Dr. Zaki Ahmed, Chief of Staff, is leading this work. More information will be shared as it is confirmed.

Human Resources is investigating and confirming the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic plan to staff in terms of vacation, redeployment, sick time, self-isolation and other area. Details will be shared with staff as they are available.

Our hospital will not issue sick notes to community members and we have urged businesses and organizations not to request sick notes from employees for absences related to COVID-19.

Screening at Hospital entrances is going well. Thank you to all for your cooperation. Please remember to arrive early for your shifts in case there are any delays.

A self-screening online tool for staff and professional staff is being rolled out. This tool is for your convenience and will reduce delays for everyone at all entrances. More information and instructions will be provided.

Thank you all for respecting the visitor restrictions that have been put in place for everyone’s health and safety. We are restricting access as much as possible, so volunteers will only be permitted in limited areas.

Ontario officially declared a state of emergency this morning. We are learning what this means for our Hospital. Meanwhile, we continue to implement our pandemic plan and respond to the COVID-19 situation according to guidelines and medical directives.

For questions about COVID-19 testing criteria, please contact the TBDHU’s Infectious Disease Program at 807-625-5900 or toll free at 1-888-294-6630.

Local COVID-19 case status: <https://www.tbdhu.com/coronavirus>

Provincial COVID-19 case status: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-0>

Canada COVID-19 case status: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

COVID-19 Daily Situation Report videos: <https://comms.tbrhsc.net/covid-update-videos>

All Hospital COVID-19 updates are available on the iNtranet at <https://comms.tbrhsc.net/covid-19-information/>