

Pembroke Regional Hospital Prepares For Gradual Reintroduction Of Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2020

PEMBROKE - After temporarily suspending non-emergent appointments and procedures in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pembroke Regional Hospital has received approval from Ontario Health to begin gradually resuming scheduled care.

“We recognize that this has been a difficult time for our patients as they wait to receive care which was postponed while the hospital focused on ensuring we had enough capacity, staff and supplies to be able to care for patients with COVID-19,” said PRH President and CEO Pierre Noel.

In mid-March, hospitals across the province were directed to halt all non-emergency surgeries and other elective procedures in order to make room for a potential surge of COVID-19 patients. Emergency procedures, however, were allowed to continue.

“Thanks to the efforts to date of the community at large, and what we hope will be continued efforts by those in our region to reduce the spread of this virus even as the province reopens, the number of COVID positive cases in Renfrew County has been very low, with only two COVID positive patients needing to receive care in our facility,” Mr. Noel said.

While PRH staff and physicians are eager to reintroduce services and welcome back all patients, the top priority will be making sure that everyone remains safe.

Mr. Noel said the ramp up of service will be based on provincial and regional frameworks for the reintroduction of surgeries and diagnostic procedures which outline all of the measures that must be in place for this to occur including ensuring capacity remains available for any surge in COVID-19 cases and ensuring that there is enough personal protective equipment available.

“Given we are still in a pandemic, it may be some time before we can fully open all services,” Mr. Noel said. “Patients will be prioritized to ensure those most in need are seen first and they will be contacted by the hospital or by their family physician to reschedule their appointment or procedure.”

Others, he added, will need to continue to wait for rescheduled in-person appointments, but may continue to receive care virtually where possible.

The Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (RCVTAC) also remains accessible 24/7 for residents who have non-life-threatening health issues and do not have a family physician or cannot reach their family physician. This service is available by calling 1-844-727-6404.

As more patients return to Pembroke Regional Hospital, they may find their hospital experience has changed a bit, particularly for those who haven’t had to come to hospital during the pandemic.

Everyone who enters the facility will continue to be screened for COVID-19 and will be required to wear a mask. While masks will be provided to those who need them, where possible, patients are asked to bring and wear their own.

“Due to continued challenges around supply of personal protective equipment and in particular procedure masks, we would like to be able to conserve our stock as much as possible by having our patients and others coming to the hospital bring and wear their own mask. We also continue to welcome donations of fabric masks from those in the community who are making these which we could provide to our patients in lieu of taking from our clinical supply,” Mr. Noel said.

Health care team members will also be wearing masks and other forms of personal protective equipment and patients will notice that many measures have been taken throughout the hospital to ensure physical distancing and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

At this time, Mr. Noel added, the province has not given direction to hospitals to reduce or remove visitor restrictions which were put in place early in the pandemic.

“We recognize how difficult it is for families to be separated from loved ones who are in hospital and how upsetting it is to not have a support person accompany patients for appointments or procedures unless they are deemed essential, but this is not a decision our hospital can make,” said Mr. Noel, adding that any amendments will come as a direction from the province and will be implemented at hospitals across the Champlain region.

“Until we can welcome visitors back into the building we assure those in our care and their families that we will continue to do whatever possible to support virtual visits and to provide the compassion and care that our patients need and deserve,” Mr. Noel said.

The hospital is committed to providing public updates on programs, services and visitor guidelines as they evolve.

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