

COR-2020-121226/01

November 9, 2020

Mr. John Carpay, B.A., LL.B.
President
Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms
253-7620 Elbow Drive SW
Calgary, AB T2V 1K2

Dear Mr. Carpay:

Thank you for your letter of September 8, 2020, in which you inquired about Newfoundland and Labrador's COVID-19 response as it relates to the cancellation of surgeries, diagnostic testing and other medical procedures.

On March 16, 2020, regional health authority (RHA) procedures, testing and surgeries were reduced in the province in response to COVID-19 planning and system preparation. These service reductions decreased system demands and occupancy rates, promoted physical distancing, reduced the demand for PPE and contributed to the slowing of COVID-19 disease transmission.

During the first wave of the pandemic, emergent and urgent testing and procedures continued for all services, while service reductions occurred for non-urgent and elective tests and procedures. To mitigate impacts on patients and providers, Newfoundland and Labrador significantly expanded virtual care.

RHAs have also identified strategies to safely expand capacity beyond current levels so that more patients can be seen faster, including increasing use of virtual care and other technologies; expanding clinic times and hours of operations where feasible; assessing and maximizing staffing levels; and decreasing the number of no-shows. RHAs are increasing capacity to address backlogs wherever possible.

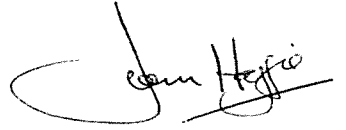
My department has been closely monitoring service provision levels since mid-March 2020 and will continue to monitor the status of RHA backlog reduction initiatives. Throughout the summer, all RHAs continued with normal schedules as much as possible versus moving to a reduced summer schedule in an effort to reduce the number of patients waiting. In some areas,

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wait times have increased, while in other areas, the decrease in referrals from referring practitioners and waitlist improvement initiatives has contributed to an improvement in wait times for patients.

We hope that you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Haggie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

JOHN HAGGIE, MD, FRCS
MHA – Gander
Minister