



**NATIONAL INFECTION CONTROL WEEK
OCTOBER 16-20, 2023**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF IPAC CANADA:

It is National Infection Control Week, a time to remind everyone about the importance of Infection Prevention and Control and a time to celebrate the work accomplished by each and every member of IPAC Canada. Your efforts and your passion keep healthcare providers, patients, students, volunteers, and visitors safe in a wide variety of healthcare settings and a broad range of activities.

This year, the theme for International Infection week is “**Unmasking the Future**”, a fitting image that speaks to predicting the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our experiences since early 2020 have stretched every one of us, and required that we make recommendations that were significantly different from the tenets upon which we historically relied. The response to this invisible foe took directions we have not previously seen, and which were highly controversial in many cases, both publicly and within the healthcare arena. Some felt they were too stringent, others believed not enough was being done to protect the vulnerable. Decisions were made with the best of intentions in the heat of battle, but our job now is to look to the future and apply the learning that we have gained through this incredibly difficult time.

There is little doubt that the future will look different than the past, particularly in management of viral respiratory illnesses. Whether the future holds additional emphasis on use of N95 respirators or broader application of masks for staff, visitors and patients remains to be seen as newer guidelines are released to inform our practice. The need for stewardship of resources will also be a strong influencer in future approaches to infection prevention and control.

There is no doubt in predicting that education of healthcare workers will be crucial to assist in their understanding of new knowledge and practices that may be forthcoming. A clear focus emerging is related to the intricacies and importance of the point of care risk assessment to ensure each individual has the knowledge and ability to make the most rational decisions to protect themselves and their patients from suspected or known infection.

Outside of COVID-19, healthcare associated infections continue to be a major concern worldwide. The unrelenting rise of antimicrobial resistant bacteria and the constant threat of organisms that could spark the next pandemic are real risks that have to be recognized, addressed, prevented or managed, and this is accomplished through the dedication of people in the realm of infection prevention and control.

Your leadership, educational efforts, systematic surveillance activities, advocacy, and innovation are needed now more than ever. Helping others protect themselves and decrease the risk of infection through all these actions is critical work that not only saves lives but saves precious healthcare dollars. The fundamentals of infection control are both effective and cost effective and make a tangible and positive difference in keeping people safe at their most vulnerable times.

To help you celebrate this week and promote the crucial work that you do, IPAC Canada has a number of resources available on our website at [National Infection Control Week | IPAC Canada \(ipac-canada.org\)](https://www.ipac-canada.org/national-infection-control-week).

Your work deserves so much more than a simple “Thank you” can convey. As a fellow infection control professional or infection preventionist who recognizes your commitment and your unique knowledge and skillset, I want to say thank you for all you do, individually in your role. And I offer this sentiment with a great sense of pride for all WE do, collectively.

Colette Ouellet, MHA RN BN CRM CIC

President IPAC Canada