

A Message from the Chairman and Executive Director

We hear a lot of people – including ourselves – talk about adjusting to the “new normal” lately. But these are not “normal” times. With each passing day of the COVID-19 crisis, we hear that. We experience it. All of us at the Port Authority are playing a vital role in keeping not just the region, but the nation moving. It is an extraordinary challenge.

We all hear the statistics. We all know these are not just numbers – they are people and, undoubtedly, this crisis will touch many of us personally. These are not “normal” times.

And the next few weeks will be among the most challenging we face as numbers mount and we reach the peak of this sobering crisis.

The Port Authority Retiree Association noted in its powerful letter to the Agency published in Monday’s Broadcast: “We know that this is not business as usual; in truth it is a situation not previously experienced by most of us, and experienced at this scale by none of us. Even during the ’93 bombing or the attacks on the WTC on 9/11, while work was done around the clock, it was performed without all the uncertainties and perils, both known and unknown, that you are facing today.”

If we look at the history of the Port Authority, there is a singular philosophy that has guided us through the dark: We are guided by facts, but we are motivated by our humanity, resolve and grit.

Many of you are working remotely. Business attire has been shed so you can “report to work” while inside your homes, while also managing children and family care. At home desks or at kitchen tables, Port Authority employees are keeping the vast machinery of our Agency running; thousands of dedicated women and men are part of the daily effort to keep the region moving.

Essential workers are at the frontlines. They report to work each day to ensure that thousands of other essential workers – healthcare providers, first responders, public workers, clerks and cashiers in grocery stores and pharmacies – can get to their jobs. Our essential workers are keeping PATH running, bridges, tunnels, terminals and airports open. And at the Port, they are part of the human chain that is keeping our region supplied with medicines, food and fuel.

Some of us work remotely. Others are at the front lines. All of us are connected.

Departments and facilities have become creative in how they can maintain not just human contact, but the humanity we rely upon. Here are but a few examples:

- Holding weekly departmental check-ins via WebEx, encouraging video connection among co-workers and among family and friends.
- A remote “Café Luncheon,” for staff to connect in an informal setting.
- A virtual “Popcorn Friday,” encouraging staff to join a WebEx with their favorite snacks and to share images of family and pets.
- A virtual “happy hour” on Friday afternoons.

We encourage you all to stay connected to one another, reach out to colleagues living alone or juggling work and family simultaneously. Stay connected.

Over a century ago, the seeds for our Agency were planted as the world faced the 1918 influenza pandemic and the ravages of a global war. It was in that context that the Port Authority was created to bring a cohesive structure to the region's ports.

As the decades passed, that role expanded. But the core reason for the Port Authority's very existence – a bi-state agency created to ensure that vital regional infrastructure is built, maintained and functions at all times – remains as true today as it was a century ago.

Port Authority assets are the region's assets. You are called to do impossible things and find a way to make them possible because results matter.

- Healthcare providers are saving lives because of you.
- Police, fire fighters and first responders report to duty because of you.
- Essential workers are getting to their jobs because of you.
- Medicines and medical supplies are arriving in hospitals and clinics because of you.
- Fuel deliveries continue because of you.

We were, we are, and we always will be a team. That is the essence of the Port Authority.

These are not "normal times," but together we can continue to be extraordinary.

We could not be prouder of you.

Kevin J. O'Toole
Chairman

Rick Cotton
Executive Director