

**Ministry of
Long-Term Care**

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December 4, 2020

The Honourable Frank N. Marrocco
Chair Commissioner
Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission
24th Floor, 700 Bay Street
Toronto ON M5G 1Z6

Dear Chair Commissioner Marrocco:

Thank you for your letter and interim recommendations sent on December 4, 2020. As we recognize the urgency of this situation, we appreciate this second set of timely recommendations to help Ontario continue to act swiftly to protect residents and staff in long-term care homes.

My ministry is carefully reviewing your recommendations and we will provide you with a more comprehensive response early next week.

We are working diligently to solve the long-standing and systemic challenges facing the long-term care sector. We have taken expert recommendations from the Staffing Study and the Commission's October 23rd Interim Recommendations to heart. We recently announced that we are increasing the hours of direct care for each long-term care resident to an average of four hours per day – a record in the country. Delivering on this unprecedented commitment will require working closely with all partners across the sector, in order to educate and hire the tens of thousands of staff needed. We will set hard targets, to be laid out in our forthcoming Staffing Strategy, to achieve this historic standard.

COVID-19 demands a culture of continuous learning: the more we learn, the better we can plan and prepare for potential future waves.

Our government has also taken measures to:

1. Increase frequency of testing of both visitors and staff in the orange-restrict, red-control and grey-lockdown levels of the COVID-19 response framework.
2. Partner with hospitals to support homes with medical expertise in infection, prevention and control.
3. Enable hospitals to deploy health professionals to homes experiencing critical staffing shortages.
4. Increase and stabilize Ontario's supply of protective personal equipment, including same day delivery to homes in urgent need.
5. Limit the admission of residents to ward rooms where any outbreak is more difficult to contain.

The safety of residents and staff in long-term care is our number one priority. The ministry is in frequent contact with homes regarding the rapidly changing situation and risk level to residents. We continue to work directly alongside our partners at the local public health units to protect both staff and residents. The Ministry is also working with the Ministry of Health and sector partners in the development of guidelines which will assist in the transferring of residents to alternate settings where appropriate.

Homes are required to meet rigorous provincial standards for all public health concerns, including outbreak management systems for detecting, managing, and controlling infectious disease outbreaks. Decisions regarding when and where to put alternative management support are made on a case-by-case basis.

We are committed to using every resource available to support both homes and staff as we work to stop the spread of COVID-19.

We look forward to receiving the Commission's final report and recommendations by April 30, 2021. Keeping Ontarians safe—particularly our most vulnerable—continues to be the top priority of our government.

Thank you again for sharing your interim recommendations.

Sincerely,



Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Long-Term Care

c: Richard Steele, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care
David Corbett, Deputy Attorney General, Ministry of Attorney General
Sunil Mathai, Senior Counsel, Crown Law Office - Civil