

December 18, 2020

Dear Residents and Long-Term Care (LTC) Home Team Members,

In these last remaining days of 2020, I wanted to share with you, some significant Ministry announcements, and an opportunity for resident engagement with the LTC Commission.

LONG-TERM CARE COVID-19 COMMISSION: RESIDENTS' FEEDBACK

We invite long-term care residents across Ontario to connect with the Ontario Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commissioners to share your experience.

[Click Here for French Version](#)

BACKGROUND: [The Ontario Long-Term Care \(LTC\) COVID-19 Commission](#) began in July 2020. The Commission has a clear mandate to investigate how and why COVID-19 spread in LTC homes, what was done to prevent the spread, and the impact of key elements of the existing system on the spread.

As previously reported in [OARC's October e-newsletter](#), the OARC team and Board members met with the Commissioners of Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission. The information that Board members shared was widely reported in the news media and elements of the discussion with the Commissioners were captured in the [Commission's interim report](#).

WHAT RESIDENTS CAN DO: As the Commission continues its investigation, the Commissioners are very interested in continuing to hear from LTC home residents about the impact of the pandemic on residents; and, ideas for changes that may help prevent a similar tragedy in the immediate and longer-term future.

To facilitate your ability to share your views with the Commission, OARC will be hosting four dedicated feedback sessions in January/February, each lead by a Commissioner occurring:

• Wednesday, January 13 2 – 3:30 pm ENGLISH	• Wednesday, January 20 2 – 3:30 pm ENGLISH
• Wednesday, January 27 2 – 3:30 pm FRENCH	• Wednesday, February 3 2 – 3:30 pm ENGLISH

If you would like the opportunity to participate in one of the above-noted sessions and engage directly with a Commissioner, please select your preferred session and register here: <https://attendee.gototraining.com/rt/3697751474385309953>

SPACE IS LIMITED: Registration is limited to residents living in long-term care homes in Ontario. Space in these meetings will be limited to 8-10 residents per session to ensure that everyone involved has opportunity to share. Please register for only one session. These sessions will be recorded for transcription purposes, and the transcripts will be made public on the Commission's website (www.ltccommission-commissionsld.ca) Please note that although the Commission will not publish your name in the transcript, of the group session, your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If this is a concern for you and you would still like to submit your experience, there are some other options you may wish to consider:

- Provide a written submission Carla Novakovic, the Commission's Executive Assistant, at Carla.Novakovic@LTCcommission-CommissionSLD.ca and indicate that you wish for your submission to remain confidential.
 - We may share the general themes expressed in confidential submissions without attribution in any interim or final report.
 - Please note that if the confidential information you provide identifies an immediate risk to the health and safety of an individual or individuals, the Commission may take steps to ensure that this information is shared with those organizations who can address the risk.

Calling the Commission at (416)-314-4175 or Toll Free: 1-888-333-2614. You may request that the information you share with the Commission in writing or verbally remain confidential.

The perspective and experiences of residents is essential to the Commission's work. Your voice and opinions matter. We hope that you will plan to attend consider attending these meetings!

Please contact Melissa McVie x 260 mmcvie@ontarc.com if you require more information.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAM

A sense of hope, renewal and optimism is beginning to emerge with the announcement of vaccines available to protect us from COVID-19. While these are early days, and mass distribution will take time, work has begun. Below are a number of documents released by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care designed to educate Ontarians about the vaccine program.

On December 7, 2020, the province announced the key populations that will be first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, namely:

- Residents, employees and staff, and essential caregivers of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors
- Health care workers (including all those who work in health care settings and those in direct contact with patients)
- Adults in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations where infection can have disproportionate consequences, including those living in remote or isolated areas
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care

I spoke with government a few days ago, to learn about intentions for long-term care homes across the province, and what work is currently being done. Here are some highlights of that discussion:

- There is a pilot program currently underway with the Pfizer vaccine, utilizing 2 sites as the distribution centres, from which staff/team members of surrounding long-term care homes are invited to receive the vaccine
 - Ottawa Hospital: approximately 10 long-term care homes in the vicinity are involved
 - University Health Network in Toronto: approximately 20 long-term care homes are involved
 - 10-15% of team/staff members are being vaccinated in the first cohort. This is to guard from any unanticipated problematic issues with the vaccine. It would not make sense to vaccinate very large percentages of the workforce, just in case there is an issue which would negatively affect the homes' ability to have adequate staff/team members available to work.
 - Receiving the vaccine is a voluntary process
- The Pfizer vaccine must be kept in very specialized freezers, at -70 degrees. Once taken out of the freezer, the medicine must be used within 12 hours. Because of this, this vaccine is not easily transportable; therefore it is not a viable solution for residents in long-term care homes, most of whom cannot travel to receive the medicine.

- The Moderna vaccine is as effective as the Pfizer vaccine, expected to be available very soon, does not require the special freezers (can be kept at a warmer temperature until used), and is therefore transportable. Government has advised that most likely, the Moderna vaccine will be provided to residents, reserving the Pfizer vaccine for staff/team members.

To read specifics of the vaccination plans, click on the following:

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Approval Process and Safety](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Administration](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Availability and Rollout](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet](#)
- [Guidance for Vaccinated Health Care Workers](#)

LONG-TERM CARE STAFFING PLAN ANNOUNCED

OARC shares the vision of the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) for long-term care homes; where team members love their jobs, and residents enjoy excellence in care and wellbeing, and both are fully supported and enabled to thrive. The staffing plan [announced yesterday](#) is welcomed, and OARC is grateful for the dynamic plan that incorporates financial investment, recruitment, education, job satisfaction, technology, accountability and the development of a quality framework based on consultation with residents and their families. Work is done in vain if residents and their families are not given opportunity to express what is important to them in measuring person-centred care. OARC is committed to work with government and system partners to bring this plan to fruition.

Highlights of the 4-year plan include:

- Increase staffing levels:
 - create more than 27,000 new positions for Personal Support Workers, Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses to meet the commitment of providing 4 hours of average direct care per resident per day (goal to be achieved by 2025)
 - increase the provision of “allied health” (eg. Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, etc.) services by 20%
- Expand and accelerate education opportunities to yield the volume of new staff that will be required:
 - Launch recruitment campaigns to drive enrollment & employment
 - Strategize and initiate ways to stabilize current staffing
 - Create new pathways to increase the supply of new workers
- Support professional development:
 - Enhance training programs for Infection Protection and Control
 - Develop initiatives that support career growth and satisfaction (mentorships, preceptorships, communities of practice)

- Improve working conditions:
 - Increase opportunities for full-time employment
 - Review the province’s funding formula with goal of reducing documentation and reporting requirements that feed into the current allocation of resources
 - Promote innovative approaches to work and technology
- Drive effective and accountable leadership in homes
 - Improve oversight, guidance and medical outcomes
 - Increase number of Attending Nurse Practitioners
 - Enhance support and education for Medical Directors & home Administrators
- Measure and evaluate success along the way and adjust course as needed
 - Develop robust indicators of success including resident, family and staff satisfaction
 - Develop and support a culture of continuous quality improvement

To read the full Staffing Plan, click here: [A Better Place to Live; A Better Place to Work: Ontario's Long-Term Care Staffing Plan](#)

As I read the Staffing Plan, I kept OARC’s mandate top of mind, with an eye on collaboration and partnership. How and where will OARC contribute? OARC is a culture change engine; we speak through our resident leaders, provide consultation, advice and we educate on the resident experience, Residents’ Councils, Residents Bill of Rights, etc. OARC is committed to working with government, stakeholders, and system partners. Some specific opportunities are bolded and underlined in the following statements taken from the Staffing Plan:

- Launch targeted **awareness and recruitment campaigns** to drive enrollment and employment (aimed at high school, college & university students, employment centres, newcomers, and 2nd career seekers)
- Invest \$10 million in an annual training fund to support **staff education**
- Promote **leadership onboarding and training**
- Support development and **education of home administrators**
- **Support Medical Directors** as they navigate their work
- Move towards a culture of **effective communication** and **continuous quality improvement**
- The Ministry will **engage with residents and families to understand what quality of life and quality of care means to them** (to develop a new quality framework and performance measures to guide oversight and quality improvement in long-term care homes)

HOLIDAY WISHES FROM OARC

In whatever way you traditionally acknowledge or celebrate this time of year, we are certain that this year looks and feels different. While COVID-19 continues to dominate our thoughts, our practices, our lifestyles, our freedoms... we want to ensure that you know that the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils continues to hold you close.

Living and working in long-term care homes has never been more challenging than right now. You have lived with restrictions to visiting with friends, loved ones, family members and one another. You have been affected emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Your Residents' Councils are changed, and the way you communicate with one another, families and team members is affected. And yet, as we pause to reflect on our message to you now, we hold on to a sense of hope. May this coming New Year be the year that the vulnerabilities and challenges in long-term care homes are corrected, that COVID-19 is defeated, and that you have all you need and deserve.

We wish to express our deepest thanks to your team members who have worked tirelessly in efforts to keep everyone safe. And we thank you for sharing with us, so openly, so that we can bring your voice accurately forward to government, stakeholders, and community. As we reflect on the intrinsic hope that embodies this season, we wish you peace, calm, love and yes... hope.

Sincerely,



Dee Lender
Executive Director, OARC