

## **COVID-19 REPORT**

"We must continue to act swiftly and decisively to keep our loved ones in long-term care safe, as well as their caregivers," said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care. "Our long-term care homes continue to be the front-lines of this pandemic and we must continue to work around the clock to assist all our dedicated staff during this crisis."

Targeted interventions for LTC announced by the province yesterday include:

- Increased testing for all asymptomatic residents and staff.
- Working with hospitals across the province to deploy additional staffing and infection prevention controls in long-term care homes.
- Assisting 20 long-term care homes, which were previously experiencing outbreaks, to become now outbreak-free.
- Accepting assistance from the federal government that includes personnel and other supports from Health Canada, the PHAC and the Armed Forces.

[LTC COVID-19 News Release, Apr 22](#)

Daily news reports show how the scourge of COVID-19 disproportionately affects some LTC home, such as Orchard Villa in Pickering, where 31 residents have died. The impact is greatest on the frontline workers. The attached report describes how staff scramble to provide care. Many are COVID-19 positive and are off sick. Unfortunately, communication with families and others on the outside also suffers. Laura Tamblyn Watts, CEO of CanAge, Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy Organization, addresses systemic issue in long term care. Canada has no national standards for LTC. There are no staffing level requirements. Personal support workers (PSWs) are poorly paid. PSWs may have difficulty getting full time work and benefits, requiring them to work in more than one facility. "We pay incongruently less money for medical workers the farther they are from the hospital." Salaries for nurses in home care and LTC are less than the hospitals. Nurses in LTC may have more difficulty to get full time hours and benefits. Tamblyn Watts advocates for "robust national standards" that will bring out systemic changes.

[Family stories from COVID-19, CBC Frontburner, Apr 22](#)

The above item refers to the perceived reduction in inspections for LTC homes. The media have related the reduction of comprehensive inspections, Resident Quality Inspections (RQI), to the COVID-19 outbreak. The connection is unclear. Laura Tamblyn Watts refers to “Justice Gillese’s fabulous Inquiry”, the Long Term Care Inquiry, released on July 31, 2019. The practice of annual RQIs began in 2013. The Report of the Auditor General, tabled in December 2015, found a backlog of complaints and critical incident reports because of the prioritization of RQIs. In the fall of 2016, the Inspections Branch rolled out a new “risk-focused” RQI for well performing homes. The intent was to increase the efficiency of critical incident and complaint inspections. (LTCl, v.II p.410) Risk-based inspections promotes closer oversight of high-risk homes.

Facility redevelopment and staffing is more directly related to the COVID-19 crisis in LTC. Many of the more serious outbreaks have occurred in C-bed facilities, which have residents in close proximity and little flexibility for isolation. The LTCl makes 91 Recommendations to improve the Safety and Security of Long Term Care Homes. Many deal with awareness of the health care serial killer, medication management and death investigation. Recommendation 85 deals with the staffing: “The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should conduct a study to determine adequate levels of registered staff in long-term care (LTC) homes on each of the day, evening, and night shifts. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should table the study in the legislature by July 31, 2020. If the study shows that additional staffing is required for resident safety, LTC homes should receive a higher level of funding overall, with the additional funds to be placed in the nursing and personal care envelope.”

<https://longtermcareinquiry.ca/en/final-report/>

Dr. George Heckman will present a webinar on management of heart failure in LTC tomorrow, Friday, April 24, at 10:00 AM. While this session provides specific information for the LTC environment. Effective chronic disease management can lessen care requirements and promote comfort and quality of life. This session will be important for clinicians treating heart failure during COVID-19 outbreaks. Register in advance.

[Heart failure management in LTC, Apr 24](#)