

March 20, 2020

Dear residents and family members,

These days are unprecedented days dealing with and living through the precautionary measures with COVID-19. We wanted to update you on a few items that are important to understand at this challenging time:

### **Funding for LTC homes:**

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Health, Honourable Merrilee Fullerton, wrote a memo to all LTC homes stating that initial funding of \$50,000,000.00 is available to “fund the extraordinary costs related to the rapid response required to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19.” ([Minister's Letter](#)) All homes will receive \$37,500 immediately, followed by an additional \$37,500 in April 2020. The terms and conditions for this funding are in a memo from Janet Hope, the Assistant Deputy Minister of LTC Policy Division , ([ADM Letter](#)). Eligible expenses may include:

- Staffing expenses to provide immediate 24/7 health screening to ensure staff and visitors are not ill when entering the building, and to screen residents on an ongoing basis to provide early containment of any new infections.
- Additional staffing as required by LTC homes for prevention and containment activities, and to replace workers who are sick.
- Increased costs of cleaning, equipment, and operating supplies beyond typical levels.
- Any other expenses to implement infection control measures based on clinical evidence, advice by a physician or other regulated health practitioners with expertise in infection control.

### **New residents moving into LTC homes during COVID-19:**

People who require and who have been approved for LTC homes are still able to move into LTC homes at this time. All appropriate active screening measures are to be in place at the LTC home level to ensure that new and existing residents and team members are

kept safe. People moving into LTC homes during this time is essential because in so doing, hospital beds are being freed.

In addition to a screening checklist, the Ministry of Health has updated an LTC document called “COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes” that contains important safety information pertaining to screening, visiting restrictions, Occupational Health & Safety, etc. ([Guidance Document](#), [COVID-19 Screening Checklist](#))

### **Health Care Workers who work at multiple health care sites:**

The reality of the LTC workforce is that many health care workers are employed by multiple health care settings (in the broader community sector and multiple LTC homes). In this time of preventative action regarding COVID-19, active and consistent screening is imperative for all health care providers. To date there is no government directive stating that health care workers must only work at one site. The Ministry has stated that individuals who work at multiple sites should identify themselves to their managers and develop an individualized plan to manage their employment across settings over the course of the pandemic. ([March 19, 2020 - Memo: Managing Health Worker Illness and Return to Work, COVID-19](#))

### **Q&As: Ontario Enhancing COVID-19 Protections for Long-Term Care Residents, Families and Staff**

The Ministry of Long-Term Care has provided information to address questions regarding Ontario’s enhanced measures for protecting long-term care residents, families and staff. Please review the attached document. [Click here](#) to read the document.

### **Restriction on visiting – Emotional and Social impacts:**

#### Message from Family Councils Ontario:

We’ve been hearing from families how difficult it is not be able to visit their resident. Families are heartbroken about not being able to sit with their loved one, worried about how the time they spent assisting with mealtimes and other activities of daily living will be replaced by home staff, and how they can make connections with their loved one when physically distanced. To maintain social connection in a time of physical isolation, we encourage you to consider virtual visits through platforms such as Zoom (we’ll be releasing materials next week that can help you do this), calling your loved one, asking the home to bring your resident to a ground floor window and set up a phone call for a visit, and dropping off care packages and letters (contact the home for details on how to prepare and drop off these items).



Family  
Councils  
Ontario

During a time of crisis, it's normal for people to feel stressed, isolated, and unsure. If you have questions or concerns about COVID-19 and its impact on long-term care residents or need support, please call FCO. We're here for you.

Stay tuned for information on new resources and initiatives we're working on that will help you navigate and manage throughout this crisis.



Samantha Peck  
Executive Director, Family Councils Ontario

Message from Ontario Association of Residents' Councils:

We know that isolation, depression and loneliness are often associated with living in LTC homes. Social engagement, purposeful activity and kind human touch between friends and family members are significant counter measures for these conditions. However, with the current restrictions on visiting in LTC homes (only people who are visiting residents who are gravely ill or dying are permitted to visit), residents could be at increased risk of living with feelings of loneliness and depression. These conditions could be exacerbated for residents who live with cognitive changes due to dementia or mental health conditions.



Team members across our LTC homes are demonstrating incredible creativity and commitment to alleviating depression and loneliness, paving the way for stories of gratitude and success. The reality is that as creative as these ideas are, most require a draw on team member time; time that in a crisis situation, may be spent in delivering direct care to residents.

OARC is always interested in what residents are doing to be part of the solution. What can residents do on their own, or with some assistance that can help in connecting with their co-residents in meaningful ways that can alleviate depression, loneliness and isolation?

OARC's Board of Directors is made up of residents living in LTC homes across Ontario. We asked them what they're doing to help residents feel connected, socially well and emotionally healthy during this time when visiting has ceased in LTC homes. Residents want to be part of the solution. Here's what they said!

## **Residents Leader Ideas to Cope with Visitation Restrictions:**

- Residents are sharing their technology with fellow residents so that they may speak on a cell phone, text, video conference (Face Time, Zoom, Google Duo, Skype) with their family members. Be sure to use disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.
- Employees who are working modified duty are coming into the home to participate in one-on-one visits with residents.
- Residents reported that homes are arranging to have family members and residents connect via cell phone or iPads utilizing Skype or other platforms. Often a schedule needs to be set up so that residents and family members know what day and time they have been assigned to. Residents can assist by creating a schedule.
- Activities in smaller group setting (example – group of 10 residents with puzzles, games and colouring instead of 20 residents)
- Resident Leaders are making themselves available to fellow residents to talk and explain why things are happening as they are, providing reassurance and companionship
- Have families come to the window of the long-term care home and see their loved ones – maybe sing a song
- Residents can travel in hallways (observing principles of social distancing) with a smile and a song or whistle, extending greetings to residents and team members along the way.
- Residents FEEL the tension from their team members who are working to serve them. Residents can offer words of support and encouragement and thanks to the health care team members who are working so hard in such difficult times.
- Assist residents to send emails, write letters, send pictures
- Residents acknowledged that music is contagious:
  - a. Residents sing within earshot of other residents. In an instant, a few residents who are seated in a room join in!
  - b. Put together a cart with a CD player and music and travel around to resident rooms and play music from the doorway of the resident room. Sing, clap, smile, talk.

Homes, residents and families are being creative, supportive and optimistic. Let's keep sharing the ideas and resources so we can move through this crisis in love, creativity, safety and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dee Lender". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dee Lender  
Executive Director, OARC