

April 3, 2020

COVID19: Minister Fullerton's Open Letter to LTCH Residents

Dear residents in LTC homes,

You are all members of your Residents' Council, even if you do not attend meetings. By virtue of living in your LTC home, your voice, your opinion, your ability to make choices for yourselves and one another is imperative to living the fullest life possible.

In these days, when official Residents' Council meetings are being deferred, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to remember that OARC continues to work on your behalf. We have been in touch with our Ministry and other stakeholder partners almost daily, seeking to have the resident voice at the top of mind in all conversations in this unprecedented time when life in long-term care has become challenged with all of the precautions associated with COVID-19. The Ministry is listening to OARC, expresses that we are valued partners, and trusts OARC to get information to you in a timely and accurate manner.

To that end, today I received a letter for you written from our Minister of Long-Term Care, the Honourable Merrilee Fullerton. These are very tough and emotional days filled with uncertainty. But we will get through this together! Here is the letter for you.

Sincerely yours,



Dee Lender

Executive Director, OARC

Ministry of Long-Term Care

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To our loved ones in Ontario's long-term care system,

We are in unprecedented times in Ontario. The COVID-19 global outbreak presents challenges the likes of which we have never seen. I want to assure you that our government is fighting this virus vigorously and we will continue our fight to keep you safe and healthy.

My heart goes out to those who have been affected by COVID-19 in our long-term care homes. This is a difficult time and my thoughts are with you.

You may be feeling upset that you can't see your loved ones. I can imagine that this is an extremely scary time for many of you. I completely understand your fears. These isolation measures are meant to keep you safe and protected from this outbreak. The situation is changing very rapidly. Our government is monitoring it very closely to determine when it would be safe to lift the restriction. Our government is in frequent contact with long-term care homes regarding the changing situation and risk level to residents.

I want you to know that I care about you and your caregivers and am working around the clock with my cabinet and caucus colleagues, opposition and independent members of the legislature, partners in the long-term care sector, medical experts and experts from various other sectors to make sure that everything that can be done is being done for long-term care.

Ontario has some of the world's best health care professionals and we continue to take their advice and recommendations on how to keep you safe.

The government is continuing to identify actions that we can take to assist. We must ensure our response is nimble, responsible and effective.

We are acting in real time to ensure that your caregiver has the appropriate tools and resources to keep you and them safe.

I want you to know that the Ministry of Long-Term Care's Family Support Line/Action Line continues to be available to residents, families and staff to call for information or to raise concerns related to long-term care homes. The phone number is 1-866-434-0144 and is staffed between 8:30 am and 7:00 pm, seven days a week.

We are in extraordinary times. The government will continue to fight against this virus, and I will continue acting to keep you safe.

With you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'M Fullerton'.

Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Long-Term Care