
REPORT TITLE: The Region of Peel’s Submission to Ontario’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission

FROM: Nancy Polsinelli, Commissioner of Health Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the Region of Peel’s submission to Ontario’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission, attached as Appendix I to the report of the Commissioner of Health Services, titled “The Region of Peel’s Submission to Ontario’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission”, be endorsed and submitted to the Commission for consideration;

And further, that a copy of the subject report and submission be sent to local area MPPs and MPs, Ontario’s Minister of Health, Ontario’s Minister of Long-Term Care, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and AdvantAge Ontario.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The long term care sector was among the hardest hit during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing widespread outbreaks leading to numerous lives being lost.
- COVID-19 has highlighted the urgent need for the Provincial government to ensure that long term care homes are adequately supported to both manage the COVID-19 pandemic and to meet the complex care needs of the aging population into the future.
- Ontario’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission (the Commission) was created to investigate how and why COVID-19 spread in long term care homes, the impact on residents, staff and families and the adequacy of measures taken to prevent and contain the spread.
- The Commission is expected to deliver a final report to the Provincial government by April 30, 2021.
- Recent interim recommendations released by the Commission are in alignment with several of the Region of Peel’s advocacy positions, particularly related to understaffing and improved infection prevention and control measures. However, additional long-term commitments to enable sustainable change and quality of care for seniors are required.
- The Region of Peel’s submission to Ontario’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission (Appendix I) offers insight and experiences from our role as a municipal long term care operator and provides recommendations to address longstanding advocacy efforts related to enhanced funding, increased staffing and additional supports for seniors along the continuum of care.

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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on Ontario's seniors, particularly people living in long term care homes. During the first wave of the pandemic, 55 per cent of all long term care homes experienced COVID-19 outbreaks, and 75 per cent of all COVID-related deaths in the province were in long term care¹.

The Region of Peel continues to prioritize safeguarding the people living and working in our long term care homes during the pandemic, while maintaining a focus on providing high quality, compassionate and person-centred care. Despite our ability to act quickly, the pandemic has amplified long-standing systemic vulnerabilities across the sector, such as chronic under-resourcing, increasing care needs of people living in long term care homes, and insufficient infection prevention and control training and practices. COVID-19 has highlighted the urgent need for the Provincial government to support long term care home operators by implementing widespread improvements across the sector.

All levels of government have a vested interest in addressing critical gaps in the long term care system. This fall, the Federal government announced its intention to work with the provinces and territories to develop National Standards for Long-Term Care that will address staffing challenges and ensure living conditions for people living in long term care homes are safe and dignified. On May 19, 2020, the Minister of Long-Term Care announced that the Province will be conducting an independent commission into Ontario's long term care system.

a. Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission Overview

Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission has a mandate to investigate how and why COVID-19 spread in long-term care homes, what was done to prevent the spread, and the impact of key elements of the existing system on the spread. The investigation will determine the adequacy of measures taken by the province and other parties to prevent, isolate and contain the spread, and provide recommendations on how to better protect the residents and staff in Ontario's long term care homes in the future.

Over the last several months the Commission has received written submissions and met with several groups from sector associations (including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and AdvantAge Ontario), long term care home operators, residents and families, and government officials to build their understanding of challenges across the sector and opportunities for change.

The Commission continues to meet with key stakeholders across Ontario and receive written submissions that will inform their final recommendations for the Ontario government. The Commission's final report to the Province is expected by April 30, 2021.

b. Commission's Interim Recommendations

Recognizing that Ontario has entered the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission released interim recommendations to the Provincial government in October

¹ As cited in the Interim Recommendations of Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission. Dated October 23, 2020.

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and early December. In alignment with the Region of Peel's submission outlined below and included as Appendix I, the interim recommendations recognize the importance of quality care, the need for long-term strategic investments in infection prevention and control (IPAC) supports and a comprehensive human resources strategy that addresses longstanding challenges related to recruitment, retention and remuneration across the sector.

Additionally, the Commission recommended a minimum daily average of four hours of direct care per resident. In response, the Provincial government has committed to moving forward with this recommendation and increasing care to four hours per day by 2024-25. Further detail about how the Province intends to implement and fund this commitment are expected in the Provincial Staffing Strategy, to be released in December 2020.

2. Region of Peel's Submission to the Commission

The Region of Peel's submission (Appendix I) calls on the province to enhance funding, staffing and supports across the continuum of care for seniors that will enable improvements to quality and accessibility of care, while also protecting emotional wellbeing and keeping people living and working in long term care homes safe. The submission outlines the Region of Peel's experience with COVID-19, and builds upon existing Regional priorities and advocacy positions, detailing several recommendations across four themes:

- i. Investments in effective IPAC strategies and streamlining pandemic response:** Recommendations focus on supporting long term care homes to implement sustainable infection prevention control practices through funding for IPAC specialists and sufficient and reliable access to high quality personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as streamlined communication to support consistent implementation across the sector.
- ii. Creating a stable and sustainable workforce strategy, including immediate investment in staffing to respond to COVID-19:** Recommendation for the province to work with system partners to develop and implement a comprehensive human resources strategy and make significant long-term investments to build workforce capacity, address staffing ratios and enable adequate care for people with complex conditions.
- iii. Funding and support for person-centred care and specialized dementia care:** Recommendations to enhance dementia supports across the long-term care sector through funding that aligns with increasingly complex resident care needs, dedicated and consistent training related to person-centred emotional dementia care, enhanced specialized supports and supportive structural design, as well as supporting the mental wellbeing of seniors and their caregivers and increasing access to specialists.
- iv. Funding and supports to meet community needs and client complexity along the seniors' care continuum:** Recommendations for robust and equitable funding for home care and community support services to enable aging in place and alleviate pressures in long term care and acute care settings, as well as funding for modernized and comprehensive build projects like the Seniors Health and Wellness Village as an immediate investment with far reaching impacts related to accessibility and integration of care for local seniors.

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3. Continued Advocacy and Next steps

Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission provides an opportunity to influence provincial efforts to address longstanding challenges across the long term care sector. Staff are pursuing opportunities to delegate to the Commission, and work in partnership with key stakeholders across the sector, such as AdvantAge Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), to influence the Commission's recommendations. Through AMO's Health Task Force, the Region of Peel's Director of Long Term Care participated in a stakeholder consultation with the Commission and is contributing to AMO's comprehensive written submission.

The Region of Peel is looking for the province to take immediate action to ensure that long term care homes are adequately supported to both manage the COVID-19 pandemic and meet the complex care needs of the aging population into the future. Staff continue to seek opportunities to highlight the successes of the Region in transforming care to inform system wide change. Staff continue to seek opportunities to highlight the successes of the Region in transforming care and work with all levels of government to inform system wide change.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Submission to Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission

For further information regarding this report, please contact Cathy Granger, Director, Long Term Care, Ext. 2000, cathy.granger@peelregion.ca.

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



J. Baker, Chief Administrative Officer