



February 2, 2022

Dear Deputy Minister Hannah,

The *Family Council Network 4 Advocacy* group represents (friends and family of about 11,000 residents) at all 86 Long Term Care homes in LHIN-4 (Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand Brant – including the city of Burlington and most of Norfolk county). Many of the LTC homes in our region have seen an alarming increase in reported COVID outbreaks. With the outbreaks, some homes have adopted a policy of restricting all residents to their rooms and are limiting visits only to recognized Essential Care Partners. Family members and Family Councils have expressed the concern that the return to forced isolation due to these outbreaks has notably increased the anxiety and depression in LTC residents. We echo these concerns.

We are thankful to the Ministry for releasing an update re-affirming its commitment to the limited use of isolation and the use of droplet and contact precautions only when absolutely necessary to ensure people's safety. Several Family Councils have reported the fact that progressive leaders have enacted policies that allow residents to engage in socialisation and activities outside of their rooms if they meet the criteria of no symptoms and a negative COVID-19 test. This is re-assuring.

Unfortunately, there are other reports of homes that continue to enforce building-wide "lock downs" until an outbreak is completely cleared. These are the places where growing concerns about the negative psychological and emotional impacts of isolation have been expressed. Nurses who submit the scores for the RAI indicators have noticed that the trend in anxiety and depression is rising once again.

As in previous COVID waves, the responses and practices to pandemic restrictions vary in LTC homes according to directions from administrators and/or local Public Health agencies. Inconsistent application of the directives related to access to bathing, to activities in hallways and common rooms, coupled with the growing staffing crisis, has once again raised the alarm of sub-standard care and of the setting aside of human rights. Families are questioning the validity of decisions made by some administrators and are asking for the reconsideration of protocols - with their input.

Because of this we are requesting that the following be implemented by the end of February, 2022:

1. New guidelines be circulated province-wide and be communicated to ensure consistency in the application of outbreak restrictions in all LTC homes in Ontario.
2. Access to consultation with Infection Control practitioners is provided in order to share ideas for imposing safe isolation restrictions while still promoting psychological wellness for residents and families.
3. Individual LTC homes are empowered to make context-based decisions to minimize isolation for residents who have tested negative and are asymptomatic.

Our team is available to meet with you to discuss the support needed by LTC homes and families in this time of crisis. Thank you for listening.

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Copy to:

Paul Calandra, Minister LTC

Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer Ontario

Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Opposition

Stephen Del Luca, Leader Liberal Party

Mike Schreiner, Leader Green Party

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Jeff Burch, MPP

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Parm Gill, MPP

Jane McKenna, MPP

Paul Miller, MPP

Sam Oosterhoff, MPP

Sandy Shaw, MPP

Sara Singh, MPP

Donna Skelly, MPP

Jennie Stevens, MPP

Monique Taylor, MPP

Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP and Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of LTC

Family Council Network Four represents members in the expansive region that was previously known as LHIN4. As an advocacy group, we reach out to MPP's in this area. To respond to requests for addresses of members who live in the various ridings, please connect to Chair.

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