



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

BY EMAIL merrilee.fullerton@pc.ola.org

January 14, 2021

Hon. Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Long-Term Care
6th Floor,
400 University Avenue,
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

Dear Dr. Fullerton,

Re: Long-Term Care in Ontario

On behalf of St. Basil's parish council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada (CWL), I request that you take immediate action to: 1) increase the direct care of long-term care residents to four hours per day, 2) increase funding to enable long-term care homes to hire personal support workers on a full-time basis at a living wage, and 3) fund recruitment and training programs to increase the number of personal support workers in long-term care homes.

Members of St. Basil's CWL parish council are members of the Catholic Women's League of Canada which is organized on the parish, diocesan, provincial and national levels. The mission of the CWL is to call its members to grow in faith and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service. Its objects include recognizing the human dignity of all people everywhere and contributing to the understanding and growth of social justice.

As a women's organization that was founded more than 100 years ago to assist in the resettlement of immigrants, we are particularly concerned about the care and treatment of long-term care residents, the vast majority of whom are frail, elderly women. We are also concerned about the well-being of the residents' personal support workers who are mainly women, many of whom have recently immigrated or come to Canada as refugees. It is well documented that their wages are low and working conditions poor.

Both the residents of long-term care homes and the personal support workers who provide them with most of their care are vulnerable and in need of protection: the residents, because of their complex health needs and the workers, because they have few avenues to address their inadequate compensation and working conditions. The well-being of the personal support workers affects the well-being of the residents to whom they are closely connected.

We acknowledge and thank the Government for the Long-Term Care Staffing Plan that it released on December 17, 2020, which promises the investment of \$1.9 billion dollars over the next four years to create more than 27,000 new positions for personal support workers, registered nurses and registered practical nurses and to increase the hours of direct daily care over four years.

We recognize that increasing the hours of daily care will involve increasing the number of personal support workers and other health care workers, which will require increased funding. You can't have one without the other. We also understand that the problems with long-term care have been decades in the making and cannot be fixed overnight. However, the Canadian Press recently reported that 2,900 long-term care residents in Ontario and 10 staff members have died as a result of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. They further reported that of the province's 626 long-term care homes, 218 reported an active outbreak as of January 7, 2021.

The province of Quebec had even more devastating statistics than Ontario during the first wave of COVID-19 but have had better outcomes during the second wave because they expedited the recruiting and training of about 10,000 personal support workers in between the waves so that they were in the homes by the time the second wave hit. The province of British Columbia hired 7,500 extra staff early on and are seeing better results in their long-term homes. So it can be done and should be done! Ontario's efforts and corresponding results are inadequate by comparison and in face of the recent surge of cases.

Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission, which is not due to report to the Government until April 30, 2021, considered their recommendations on staffing, resident daily care and funding to be so self-evident and urgent in light of the second wave that they released their recommendations on increased full-time

staffing and increased hours of daily care in an interim report to you on October 23, 2020.

In testimony before Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission on December 16, 2020, Dr. Jeff Turnbull, the Medical Director of Ottawa Inner City Health, said that two women working as personal support workers in long-term care were staying at one of the organization's shelters because they could not afford to pay rent on their salaries as personal support workers. Frail and elderly residents of long-term care facilities rely on these workers for their essential and often intimate personal care. The failure to pay these workers a living wage and to give them enough time to do their work suggests that as a society we do not value their work and by implication do not value the residents they serve.

We understand that you, as Minister of Long-Term Care, have a huge mandate and cannot remedy all the systemic deficiencies of long-term care homes at once. However, we reiterate our initial request that you prioritize on an expedited basis: 1) increasing the direct care of long-term care residents to four hours per day, 2) increasing funding to enable long-term care homes to hire personal support workers on a full-time basis at a living wage, and 3) funding recruitment and training programs to increase the number of personal support workers in long-term care homes and provide the public with on-going reports of your progress in these areas.

The current situation is urgent and demands immediate and effective action on your part. We thank you for considering our requests and look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Larmond Elliot
President of St. Basil's CWL Council (Ottawa)

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