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## St. Lawrence Lodge COVID-19 Bulletin

**Issue Date: May 15, 2020**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide current information regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and to inform people with respect to decisions made by the Home as guided by Public Health and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care policy decisions.

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Covid-19 is likely the biggest public health crisis Canada has ever faced. Lives are at stake, including yours and your loved one's. The care and protection of long term care Residents – and the dedicated staff who look after them – has become a critical issue in Ontario.

Right now, physical distancing and LTC visitor restrictions are essential in combatting Covid-19. We acknowledge how hard this is for all concerned; however, it is necessary to save lives.

It is up to all of us to take steps that keep our loved ones, ourselves, and our communities safe.

Since we don't yet have a vaccine or cure, the best we have is prevention. We all have a role in preventing the transmission of Covid-19. We can prevent the spread of Covid-19 by washing our hands, avoiding contact with people who are frail and vulnerable, and above all, staying home. We are all in this together.

To help manage this global pandemic, the Ontario Government has issued Directives and Emergency Orders that will help Long Term Care Homes to take the steps they need to respond to, prevent, and alleviate the outbreak of Covid-19 and to provide care to our Residents and support for our staff during the pandemic.

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### **Covid-19 News**

#### **Testing Guidance from the Province**

- On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the Province issued new Directives related to the level of testing that is to be carried out in Long Term Care Homes. The highlights include:

- Any Resident with the following symptoms should be tested:
  - A fever of 37.8 degrees or higher
  - New or worsening respiratory conditions such as cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, nasal congestion, difficulty swallowing.
  - Evidence of pneumonia.
  - Potential atypical symptoms should also be considered.
- A Resident WITHOUT symptoms who lives in the same room as a Resident who HAS symptoms must be tested, as well.

### **Current Status**

As you are most likely aware, all Residents were tested under the auspices of the Regional Health Unit on Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. We have received the vast majority of swab test results and I am pleased to report that the testing received to date has returned as negative for Covid-19.

### **Letter from Minister Fullerton to LTC Residents and Families**

The Honourable Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care, released an open letter with details on the on-going measures the Ministry is taking to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19. The letter outlines the key actions that are being taken by the Ministry, as well as, contact information for the Ministry's Family Support and Action Line, as well as the Patient Ombudsman. LTC homes have been asked to circulate this letter to residents and families. Please see the Minister's letter below.

### **Window Visiting with Residents**

We have been asked if people can come to the Home and wave to their loved one from the property. Yes, this is permitted as long as visiting restrictions are fully respected.

In particular, for those resident rooms at ground level, we wish to advise that Dr. Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, recommends that if window visits take place residents should be asked to keep windows closed and social distancing must be maintained by visitors at all times.

We continue to request that people stay Home rather than attend at the Lodge. Please maintain distance away, at least for a few more weeks, so we can continue to protect our Residents and get through this pandemic safely and unscathed.

### **Visitor Restrictions**

St. Lawrence Lodge remains closed to visitors as directed by Provincial authority. Essential visitors only are permitted. These people include those visitors who are visiting a gravely ill Resident or those persons who are performing essential clinical health care services. All essential visitors are actively screened before entering the building, including temperature checks. If they do not pass the screening, then they are not allowed to enter. Essential visitors attending with gravely ill Residents are limited to one person at a time. All essential visitors are required to wear personal protective equipment while in the building.

## Thank You

I wanted to say a heartfelt thank you, on behalf of our employees and our partners that are working diligently to care for your loved ones, for the warm letters and cards of thanks we continue to receive from family and friends of our residents. Your encouragement means a lot to all of us here at St. Lawrence Lodge. We hope to see you soon in person!

Regards,



Tom Harrington  
Administrator

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May 12, 2020

Dear Residents in Long-Term Care and Families,

During this challenging time, nothing is more important than protecting your health and wellbeing. Our government has been using its full might to defend against COVID-19 since the global pandemic reached Ontario.

Many of Ontario's long-term care homes have experienced unprecedented circumstances related to COVID-19, and we have been taking extensive, on-going measures to protect residents and staff. The Ministry of Long-Term Care has been working around the clock to support our long-term care homes from the beginning with the many groups involved in addressing this terrible virus. They include the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, public health units and the federal government.

I wish to share with you what we have been doing to provide support to our homes, including those that are in urgent need.

Building on many important measures introduced over the previous months, our government launched a [COVID-19 Action Plan for Protecting Long-Term Care Homes](#) on April 15<sup>th</sup>. The plan added even more efforts to protect residents and staff through increased COVID-19 testing, strengthened infection prevention and control, and extended efforts to grow our long-term care workforce of nurses, personal support workers, cooks, cleaners, and other staff needed to get through this pandemic.

These enhanced measures are outlined below under three pillars.

**Aggressive testing, screening, and surveillance**

As of today, more than 55,000 of our long-term care residents have been tested for COVID-19. Good progress is being made with testing underway for every single resident and staff, regardless of whether they are experiencing symptoms. With our province's growing testing capacity, this universal testing will be completed in the next few weeks. This is a critical step to defeating COVID-19 because the sooner we can identify cases, the sooner we can act to prevent spread and save lives.

**Managing outbreaks and spread of the disease**

What has occurred in some of our long-term care homes is tragic, and we are at a critical point in our fight against COVID-19. I want to assure you know that we have dedicated our full support to those homes in urgent need, and our efforts are showing results.

We have introduced additional policies and procedures to protect our residents and staff. These include mandating universal masking, restricting staff to one workplace only to limit spread between long-term care homes, and as you know, closing our homes to all but essential visitors. As hard as it is to be apart, it is important to remember that keeping COVID-19 out of our long-term care homes means only permitting visits from family members of palliative residents at this time.

Enhanced, active screening continues at all homes to limit the potential for staff or essential visitors to bring the virus into the home. Visitors who are deemed essential and all residents will continue to be

actively screened. Active screening was implemented very early in our effort to prevent the virus. This screening includes twice-daily temperature checks and assessment for typical and atypical symptoms.

We have also worked very hard to ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) needs are being met quickly and we are responding to urgent requests for additional equipment within 24 hours.

#### Growing our long-term care workforce of heroes

Along with infection prevention and control, staffing is one of the biggest challenges that homes are facing. Many teams from local hospitals are answering the call from long-term care homes in need, and we are grateful that so far, 113 partnerships are underway. To make this easier, our government issued a memo on April 25<sup>th</sup> enabling hospitals to temporarily reassign frontline staff to provide support in long-term care homes.

The Canadian Armed Forces have also stepped up to assist. As we speak, nurses, medical technicians, and general personnel are on the ground in five homes with the greatest need for staffing support. We are pleased to see some positive results and will consider redeployment as the situation evolves across the province.

In addition, in recognition of the dedication of our front-line staff, we have introduced pandemic payment increase of \$4 per hour worked for 100,000 workers in long-term care. This payment will be in place for sixteen weeks to assist workers during this very challenging time. You can learn more about it [here](#).

Since the Premier created a standalone Ministry of Long-Term Care in June 2019, my team and I have been working tirelessly to address decades of neglect of the long-term care sector. We've been working diligently on plans to address the staffing crisis, redevelopment of older homes, and a general lack of capacity for our growing numbers of seniors. We've been working on serious shortcomings in long-term care that should have been addressed years ago.

We have taken significant steps, but there is still a long road ahead of us.

The Ministry of Long-Term Care's Family Support and Action Line continues to be available to residents, families, staff, and the general public to get information, raise concerns, or even just have a chat. The phone number is 1-866-434-0144 and the line is available between 8:30 am and 7:00 pm, seven days a week.

I want to express my thanks to the Patient Ombudsman for sharing with us concerns they have received about the impact of COVID-19 on long-term care homes. I encourage concerned Ontarians to contact the Patient Ombudsman through their central phone line at 1-888-321-0339 or via their [online form](#).

Long-term care touches us all. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is being felt by us here in Ontario and around the world. Every option to support our long-term care residents, staff, and communities is on the table. We must do everything possible to fix our current long-term care situation and look ahead to a brighter way forward.

With you,



Dr. Merrilee Fullerton  
Minister of Long-Term Care