



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

June 10, 2020

Dear Premier,

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I am writing to express our deep concern for seniors in long-term care (LTC) facilities and the hard-working staff responsible for protecting and caring for them.

We owe so much to our parents and grandparents, as our seniors laid the foundation for our province. Their hard work and sacrifice is what gave us the quality of life we all enjoy. COVID-19 has challenged all British Columbians and put substantial strains on our healthcare system and support networks. Our seniors and the staff in our LTC homes have been at the forefront of our fight against COVID-19 and have experienced some of the harshest realities of this ongoing pandemic. Seniors continue to represent a disproportionately large number of COVID-19 cases and, tragically, many of the lives lost.

The heartbreak felt by families is only amplified by the current circumstances that keep family members apart from our loved ones. We have heard from many families eager to see their senior parents residing in care, as soon as it is safe to do so. We strongly feel that this government is duty-bound to keep British Columbians up to date and to provide guidance to both care home operators, staff, and family members on the plans for resumption of in-person visits with appropriate physical distancing measures in place.

Our MLAs have heard from families and advocacy groups across B.C. who believe that more must be done to ensure staff and residents in LTC, home care and assisted living homes have the supports they need to provide safe, healthy, and comfortable community environments for some of our province's most vulnerable. All seniors should expect the same level of care in every part of this province.

The Official Opposition is, therefore, calling on your government to take the following immediate actions to examine the LTC system in B.C., and to support both staff and residents throughout the province:

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- **Promptly launch a thorough independent review of LTC in British Columbia to clearly define where our LTC system performed well, and where it failed.**
 - This review should cover physical buildings and their layout, staffing arrangements and qualifications, and the medical and management responses to communicable diseases including viral epidemics, both now and in the future.
 - Only this kind of review will restore public confidence and define a path forward from the tragedy of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Create a comprehensive long-term human resources strategy to meet the growing demand for staffing in seniors' care, which should include:**
 - Allocating funding to create new training spaces for health care assistants both within and outside the Lower Mainland; and
 - Improving the credential recognition process and licensing for internationally educated health care professionals.

- **Support residents and staff to implement COVID-19 health and safety measures in LTC, home care and assisted living residences, including:**
 - The purchase of PPE for care workers, staff, and all essential frontline workers serving in LTC and assisted living residences and facilities; and
 - Establishing a fund with our federal partners to replace or refurbish older, non-standard long-term care homes and assisted living residences, focusing on eliminating multi-bed wards, narrow hallways and any areas which do not comply with physical distancing guidelines.

- **Review funding sources for home care and assisted living, both private and public, to provide more of our province's seniors with the choice to remain in their own homes, while also ensuring that all seniors can expect the same quality of care and support across our province.**

- **Provide British Columbians with a timeframe and clear guidelines for additional protective measures that will allow in-person visits and family members of seniors residing in LTC, home care and assisted living residences as outlined by British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer.**



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Regardless of party politics, every member serving in our legislature shares a collective goal with all British Columbians — we want the best for those who gave us so much.

We hope your government will listen to the ideas of the Official Opposition and advocacy groups, as well as the concerns of British Columbians whose parents, grandparents, siblings, or loved ones occupy or staff these homes. We hope that together, we can provide our elders with the care and support they deserve.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., MLA

Leader of the Official Opposition