



MEMO/NOTEDESERVICE

To / Destinataire Mayor and Members of Council

From /
Expéditeur Donna Gray
General Manager, Community and
Social Services Department

Subject / Objet Long-Term Care Preventative
Measures Date: April 30, 2020

The purpose of this memo is to provide further context and rationale for the decision to temporarily ask families of residents in City-run long-term care homes to refrain from visiting the grounds as reported in the media yesterday. The memo also outlines the actions Long Term Care must take to consider reinstating window visits. Long Term Care must mitigate the risks posed by having visitors congregate and intermingle with staff and residents on the properties, and ensure that 100 per cent of visitors comply with social distancing requirements. Mayor Watson has asked Long Term Care staff to consult with Ottawa Public Health on the development of a plan that outlines the risks and mitigation measures that would allow for the safe reinstatement of window visits in the City's long term care facilities by May 7.

To date, the City of Ottawa's approach of prioritizing residents' safety has kept all City-run long-term care home residents free from COVID-19 infection. Introducing the virus into homes as a result of family members coming into contact with residents and staff on the grounds of the homes would likely lead to the death of residents. This must be avoided. On a number of occasions visitors on the premises have not respected the physical distancing requirements and have been in direct contact with staff and residents putting residents and staff at risk of exposure. As a result of the risk to residents, staff took immediate action to restrict facility access.

The decision to restrict window visits was a difficult one. The residents of the Long-Term Care Homes depend on contact with their loved ones for their physical and emotional wellbeing.

The new measures will be in place until visits can occur safely for all the residents and staff in the Home. While the focus of the media has been on the contact between a closed window, the risk we are mitigating is the direct contact on our premises between visitors, our staff, and residents,

As of Thursday, April 30, there are [1,297](#) confirmed COVID-19 cases reported by Ottawa Public Health, including 350 cases in the other long-term care homes across Ottawa. Our community is experiencing the same devastating effects seen across the country. The Long-Term Care Homes have a responsibility to remain vigilant in their efforts to minimize

the risk of exposing the virus to residents so we can continue to have homes free of COVID-19. Prioritizing the health and safety of all residents and staff in our homes, is critical to achieving this during the current state of the pandemic in the Homes.

Since the onset of the pandemic, and since the Province has, by order, restricted access to long-term care facilities to only essential workers, families are visiting the grounds of the homes to see their loved ones. The homes are also ensuring that families with extenuating circumstances can connect. In-person visits from family members continue to be facilitated for residents who are very ill or at end-of-life. In those instances, families are gowned, masked, and can remain with their family member as needed.

The City homes have been helping residents to stay connected to their loved ones during this period of restricted access. In order to enhance the connections between residents and their families, this week the City homes deployed additional resources from Recreation, Culture and Facility Services to support socializing and residents' direct connection with their families.

The long-term care teams are finding ways for families to connect via Skype, phone calls, emails, personal letters and through other methods based on individual need and circumstance. Families are encouraged to continue to reach out to staff to schedule regular opportunities to connect with their loved ones. We acknowledge and appreciate the 717 families' current efforts and support to work with our teams to find ways for them to remain connected. These additional resources are intended to ease the isolation and emotional impacts of the separation of families.

As time has progressed, and as the Long-Term Care COVID-19 situation has worsened in Ottawa, the number of families visiting the premises of the homes has been increasing. In addition to visiting families and friends, the homes are busy locations with staff reporting and leaving work, new admissions coming into the facility, and residents going outside in the nice weather to walk and use the facilities and smoking areas.

Currently, both Garry J. Armstrong and Peter D. Clarke have active outbreaks of COVID-19 with four staff testing positive and over 235 residents tested. To-date no residents have tested positive for COVID-19 and there have been no COVID-19 related deaths as a result of the health and safety measures taken by the homes. However, a number of tests results are still pending, and the homes remain at an elevated risk level for several reasons:

- the lack of capacity for staff to monitor the physical distancing of families outside of the home;
- the unscheduled nature of the visits and the limited space for families to connect with residents;
- the enhanced health and safety precautions required during the outbreak; and
- the inability to mitigate the immediate risk to families.

All these reasons led to staff's decision on April 27 to ask families of residents in the four City-run Long-Term Care Homes to refrain from visiting the grounds during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the weather gets nicer, we would like to ensure that residents have the opportunity to go outside in their front yard to enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. Given the intense pressure to ensure residents and staff remain safe we have been required to take this immediate action. We will work with Ottawa Public Health to determine what measures can be put in place to ease this decision as soon as possible, while ensuring the health and safety of residents and staff.

Next Steps

Although we have taken these steps as part of a vigilant strategy for keeping the City homes safe during the current emergency and to respond to an immediate risk, we recognize that this pandemic is constantly changing. We will reassess this measure as the circumstances of the pandemic change.

The homes will continue to follow directives and recommendations from Ottawa Public Health and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in the promotion of resident and staff safety. Long Term Care will work with Ottawa Public Health to assess and look for mitigation measures to ensure 100% compliance to physical distancing on the premises of the homes.

We will continue to consult with families, residents, and staff for opportunities to maintain and enhance the social connections for residents and families. As circumstances and directives change the homes will adjust accordingly to support opportunities to connect.

Plans will be developed and implemented for families and residents to connect in a supervised and scheduled environment to respect physical distancing for the safety and health of residents and staff.

It is our goal that through our vigilance and diligence that families will have an opportunity in the future to again be physically in the homes and the daily lives of their loved ones.

Sincerely,

Donna Gray
General Manager
Community and Social Services

cc. Steve Kanellakos, City Manager
Senior Leadership Team
Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health, Ottawa Public Health
Community and Social Services Department Leadership Team