



Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario

**Bill 229, *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act*
(*Budget Measures*), 2020**

Remarks by the Ontario Long Term Care Association

2 - 3 pm, Monday, November 30, 2020

Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, OLTCA

**Ruth McFarlane, Vice-Chair, OLTCA Board
CEO, Durham Christian Homes**

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Good afternoon. My name is Donna Duncan. I am the CEO of the Ontario Long-Term Care Association. I'm joined today by Ruth McFarlane, vice-chair of our Association Board, and chair of our Association's Pandemic Advisory Council and our HR Emergency Task Force. Ruth is the CEO of Durham Christian Homes, a non-profit long-term care provider. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you are all well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate and tragic impact on our residents and staff in long-term care, in large part due to long-standing structural issues we identified in our pre-budget submission to this standing committee in January 2020. These issues included:

- a human resource crisis;
- the failure of governments to allow for the redevelopment of older B/C class homes and the development of new system capacity;

- a provincial waitlist of more than 36,000 people which has since grown to 38,500;
- sector oversight focused on paperwork and not on people and quality care and outcomes; and
- an unstable and outdated funding model that was not designed to ensure appropriate staffing levels and professional competencies to provide care to an increasingly frail resident population with highly complex care needs.

We know that the intensity of outbreaks has been more than 2 times higher in older B/C homes than in New and A homes, and has been 3 times higher in older homes that include 3 and 4 person rooms.

And we know where we saw – and are seeing again – significant staff shortages in a long-term care home, there can be tragic losses of life.

We are extremely grateful to the Government of Ontario for the commitment to provide emergency pandemic funding to Ontario's long-term care homes to enhance health and safety measures for residents, staff, and essential visitors. These investments are helping to support staff stabilization, enhanced infection prevention and control, the purchase of personal

protective equipment, and capital enhancements such as air conditioning and HVAC upgrades to support infection prevention and control.

We also welcome announcements for the redevelopment of older B/C homes across Ontario. More than 31,000 B/C spaces across the province will have their licenses expire in 2025. With recent government announcements and progress made on redevelopments to date, there still remains approximately 24,000 B/C spaces to be redeveloped in the next 4 years, at a time when demand for long-term care is increasing due to our ageing population. We welcome legislative, regulatory and policy changes to the current approvals process, including at the municipal level, to ensure that we are able to meet the needs of our residents for today and tomorrow. Our waitlists will only continue to grow as Ontario's population of those 80 years of age and older is set to double in the next 16 years.

While we are grateful for announced investments, and for the Government of Ontario's Wave 2 Action Plan initiatives, more is still required. Specifically, Ontario's long-term care homes face significant unfunded costs that threaten the sustainability of our homes. Ontario homes require:

- occupancy protection to be extended for a minimum of 6 months;
- the full funding of costs incurred by long-term care homes for COVID-19 prevention and containment. The estimated funding gap to date is

\$189M for the period ending March 31, 2021. This will likely increase as Wave 2 escalates; and

- financial offsets for the loss of preferred revenue which contributes to home maintenance and debt coverage for our homes.

Further, long-term care homes require additional funding and support for dedicated infection prevention and control capacity in each home.

We are grateful for the announced commitment to increase care for our residents to an average of 4 hours and look forward to working with government and all legislative representatives to ensure that the commitment is implemented successfully, especially given the critical staffing shortage in long-term care today. Much of the ability of the majority of homes to stabilize in Wave 1 was due to the introduction of staffing flexibility and new roles. We do not want to destabilize already fragile staffing teams by creating requirements that they will be unable to meet.

Ontario's long-term care homes faced a number of cuts in 2020-21, including reductions to long-term care pharmacy supports at a time when we needed to enhance pharmacy capacity in our homes. We ask that the planned further reductions be paused so that we can work together with

government and pharmacy partners to ensure that we are able to meet the complex medication needs of our frail residents in long-term care.

Ontario's long-term care homes are facing an existential crisis with the loss of insurance coverage for infectious diseases. While recently passed legislation for liability coverage specific to the COVID-19 pandemic mitigates some risks, the introduction of broad exclusions for long-term care homes – provincially, nationally and internationally – will result in the loss of financing for redevelopment, the loss of directors' and officers' liability coverage for our non-profit volunteer boards and their senior officers, and increased risk and exposure for hospital, medical and other partners who have to date been able to come into long-term care homes at risk to help to stabilize them and protect residents and staff.

In closing, we are grateful to all members of the House and this Committee for your commitment to Ontario's long-term care sector: our residents, staff and families. COVID-19 has highlighted the devastating impact of the historic structural issues facing our homes. It is essential that we work together to address these long-standing challenges as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome your questions.