

June 3, 2020

## **STATEMENT**

### **Ontario's Long-Term Care Homes Urge Federal Government to Protect Seniors, Prioritize Long-Term Care with Second Wave of COVID-19**

*Over 100,000 new beds and 100,000 new caregivers needed to serve Ontario's most vulnerable*

TORONTO, ONTARIO – The Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA), representing a majority of the province's long-term care homes, is calling on the Government of Canada to prioritize seniors in long-term care in advance of a second wave of COVID-19. This will come through leadership on a set of urgent solutions that will protect residents and the staff who care for them, while building partnerships to secure the sustainability of a sector that serves our most vulnerable. This follows comments by Ontario Premier Doug Ford that the federal government must come to the table to support long-term care in the province.

“Premier Ford is absolutely right, it will take all of us coming together to address historic and longstanding issues in long-term care including with labour, the rest of the healthcare system – and the federal government,” said Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Long Term Care Association. “As the virus emerged in Canada, we saw intensive planning for surges in hospitals. Ontario's long-term care homes were clear from the start what the impacts of COVID-19 could be and the first wave sadly proved it. We need to be enabled to apply that same rigour and planning.”

Preliminary data shows that three and four bed rooms in older buildings were hardest hit among the 30% of long-term care homes in the province who have experienced COVID-19 outbreaks. This reality inhibited implementing effective cohorting and isolation. With a waitlist of 36,000, and the population in Ontario over 80 set to more than double over the next 13 years, the only path forward is to support them to stabilize and keep COVID-19 out. The federal government must act now by joining other levels of government to support proposed solutions as COVID-19 remains a threat to our residents and their long-term care homes.

“To address our current challenges and manage the inevitable growth of older seniors that will need long term care in the next 15 years, we estimate that Ontario needs over 100,000 new beds and 100,000 new caregivers to serve and care for Ontario’s most vulnerable,” added Duncan.

Ontario has approximately 76,000 seniors in long-term care facilities. Some 36,000 are on the waitlist. That means today’s needs are 113,000 beds. We’ve got 79,000 beds today. The demand for specialized long-term care may double in the next 13 years. That’s 226,000 beds. So over the next 10 years, we need to add 147,000 beds and the people to care for those residents.

The OLTCA is calling on the Government of Canada to provide immediate support by:

- **Personal Protective Equipment and Testing:** increase procurement of masks, gloves, gowns and sanitizer, while supporting Health Canada to increase access to rapid testing tests through innovation and quicker approvals.
- **Human Resources:** existing shortages are exacerbated by staff getting sick or staying home to care for their sick family. A national human resources strategy will support the evolution of long-term care work and usher in much-needed innovation such as using digital platforms to connect homes and staff outside the province.
- **Capital Investment:** funds need to be expedited to build and redevelop long-term care homes for seniors who need help now, which generally take about 2-3 years, while creating immediate solutions to enable cohorting and isolation to protect against COVID-19 in existing homes.

“It is time for the federal government to partner with the provincial government to prioritize long-term care through urgent solutions including funding to secure its sustainability for those who need it most,” said Duncan. “There is no simple solution, but we know we cannot wait any longer to address immediate issues and start to solve historic structural and systemic problems. I won’t standby for a second wave to hit.”