

A Proposal to Reduce COVID-19 Deaths in Canada's Long-Term-Care Homes

2020 Dec 30

WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

When deaths in long-term-care (LTC) homes spiralled in the Spring, Canadians were horrified. We swore we'd do better in the Fall and yet here we are with new outbreaks and a more-infectious variant on the move.

- *Outbreaks at Alberta LTC homes triple in 3 weeks*
- *Test results can take up to 3 days*
- CBC News, 2 Dec 2020
- *26% of LTC homes have outbreaks*
- Ontario Gov't website, as of 27 Dec 2020

ACTION REQUESTED

If you think the idea outlined here has any merit, please send this PDF:

- To anyone who can make it happen by deciding to spend the money (e.g. Government decision-makers, owners of LTC-home management companies)
- To anyone who can give it enough public visibility to encourage others to spend the money (e.g. members of the Opposition, municipal leaders, members of the media, owners of hotel chains, opinion influencers)
- To anyone who might know such people

THE IDEA

Increase protection from COVID-19 for residents of LTC homes by implementing as many of these measures as necessary:

- **Reduce infections being transferred into LTC homes:**
 - By housing nurses and support workers in hotels on a work-rotation basis similar to what is used at remote camps and northern sites, paying the wage premium normally accruing to this sort of rotation
 - By enforcing a residential quarantine period in that housing before allowing workers into LTC homes
 - By paying workers for their quarantine period until rapid testing can substitute for quarantines
 - By deploying rapid testing as soon as possible and as often as necessary
 - By hiring back hotel housekeeping staff and kitchen and maintenance staff, with additional training in hygiene precautions
 - By putting hotel staff on the same rotation and in the same housing if necessary to control infection, again with commensurate pay
 - By establishing and paying for necessary family supports for all affected workers on a case-by-case basis
- **Reduce infections being transferred within LTC homes** by moving residents into hotels or other temporary accommodations, eliminating crowding and enabling segregation of infected residents

A Proposal to Reduce COVID-19 Deaths in Canada's Long-Term-Care Homes

2020 Dec 30

- **Alleviate the ongoing staffing shortages in LTC homes:**
 - By using workers displaced from other sectors as much as possible (e.g. hospitality sector workers might provide food services in LTC homes)
 - By deploying other provincial-employee volunteers wherever possible
 - By calling for qualified volunteers who would undergo the same quarantine/testing protocols

WHY NOT JUST USE LOCKDOWNS?

Widespread lockdowns might protect hospital capacity, but their acknowledged downsides have led many (including the World Health Organization) to urge their minimal use. Wherever you stand on that issue, it seems clear that widespread lockdowns have a serious limitation:

They are not giving us the results we want – and need – in LTC homes.

By contrast, targeted lockdowns have been shown to work. Back in the Spring, in an LTC home in Lyon, France, workers prevented the transmission of infection by locking themselves in with the residents for 47 days and nights.

Similarly, real bubbles work: Major sports leagues have successfully run abbreviated seasons and tournaments.

The challenge is to make this approach feasible and sustainable in more places.

WON'T VACCINATIONS SAVE US?

Yes, if and when enough people get shots. ***But they can't save lives next week.***

At year-end, we have just begun to vaccinate residents and staff in LTC homes. Over the next few months, this effort will certainly reduce infections and deaths among those groups, as well as alleviate the strain on hospitals as a result.

In the meantime, we need to do better. And we can.