

**For Immediate Release**

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## **The Council on Aging of Ottawa Calls for Change Now in Long-Term Care**

OTTAWA – The Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA) is calling on the Ontario government to show leadership and make changes to long-term care (LTC) a priority – now – during this pandemic.

“With the unfolding COVID-19 crisis in long-term care homes in our city and across the province and country, the Council on Aging of Ottawa is unwavering in its commitment to improving care in this sector,” says COA President Nicole Robert.

“This pandemic has spotlighted weaknesses in LTC. It has put residents who live in LTC, their family members who love and support them, and the staff who work there at great risk. Our hearts go out to everyone in long-term care homes who have been impacted by this pandemic. This must never happen again!”

Pre-existing and systemic vulnerabilities as well as values and attitudes towards seniors’ care have been laid bare by this pandemic. This has happened despite extensive recommendations by experts, over many decades, for improvements in LTC including specific recommendations for managing pandemics, such as in the 2006 report by Ontario’s SARS Commission.

People touched by long-term care in Ottawa need everyone’s support now. COA does not see the value of an extensive, and no doubt expensive and lengthy post-mortem “inquiry” into pandemics and LTC. There is abundant research and advice readily available to improve care in LTC. We need to move forward with critical improvements now and not delay these important changes. An independent review that focusses on transforming seniors’ care and commits to providing more funding to this sector would be welcomed. The sector needs more staff, new standards, better communication, and ongoing accountability – now.

“Seniors in Ottawa expect and deserve a safe place to live,” underlined Diane Hupé, Chair of COA’s Health Issues Committee. “Our *Statement of Concerns* focuses on changes needed right now to reduce the risks of COVID-19 to seniors living in Ottawa’s 28 LTC homes.”

COA is calling on the Ontario government to immediately address these five concerns:

1. Critical shortages of care staff
2. Inadequate infection prevention and control
3. Inadequate standards for physical environments
4. Weak communication with residents and family
5. Need for accountability and transparency.

The full *Statement of Concerns* can be found [here](#) [pdf] and [here](#) [website].

The *Statement* builds on the work of COA on LTC. In late 2019, the Board approved the *position paper*, [Long-Term Care in Ottawa: We Need Change Now!](#), that outlined COA's vision for long-term care, identified four priorities for change, and highlighted measures for monitoring these needed changes. The original plan to release the paper at a public event in early April was understandably cancelled due to the pandemic. The *Statement* is an extension of our role as a community voice for seniors in Ottawa. COA will continue to monitor the changes over time.

**About The Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA):** COA serves as a leading community voice in both official languages for Ottawa's seniors. Our aim is to help Ottawa become more Age-Friendly by identifying and addressing issues and services that impact the lives of seniors. Our vision is of respected, informed, and engaged seniors, living in an Age-Friendly city.

We achieve this through advocacy, education, research, and planning. COA has been an active part of the Ottawa community for over 40 years, identifying and addressing issues important to seniors in health, housing, social isolation, transportation, elder abuse, income security, and in making Ottawa more Age-Friendly.

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