

April 30, 2020

Honourable Doug Ford
Office of the Premier
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

sent via e-mail: premier@ontario.ca

Re: Extreme and immediate action required at Carlingview Manor Long Term Care Home

Dear Premier Ford,

I am bringing your attention to one of the most devastating situations we have ever dealt with in a Unifor workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carlingview Manor Long-Term Care Home in Ottawa has been dealing with an extreme outbreak and has created a dire situation for both workers and residents.

Almost half of the facility's residents (131 out of approximately 290) have tested positive for COVID-19 and there have been over 20 resident deaths. At this point, all but one floor in the facility has residents who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Less than half of the workforce has been tested – and 55 have now tested positive for COVID-19. Every workplace steward and the union's health and safety representative are all off of work.

COVID-19 positive and negative residents are being housed in the same ward rooms, with nothing between them but a curtain.

In terms of personal protective equipment (PPE), workers are given one Level 1 surgical mask each day and there are limited numbers of face shields (with no side protection). It is only in very limited circumstances that they are given another mask even though they are tending to patients who are both COVID-negative and COVID-positive. There have been gown shortages and dietary staff are told to wear garbage bags when they leave the kitchen to deliver food to floors housing COVID-19 positive residents. There is also little sanitizer available.

N95 masks are only being given out to workers when they are caring for a resident with a nebulizer or CPAP machine, and only when demanded by the worker. Short-staffing is a current problem, which leads to workers not changing PPE when going into rooms with negative residents even if they had previously visited a room with positive residents.

To make matters worse, the employer has not been following provincial directives around procedures and protocols related to COVID-19. The Employer is advising COVID-positive workers to come back to work after 14 days even when they remain symptomatic and clearly ill. They are also requiring asymptomatic COVID-positive staff to continue to work – which includes caring for COVID-negative residents, without adequate protection for those residents.

The Employer has not tested a significant complement of the staff, but if we extrapolate what we know, it would appear that between 35-40% of residents and staff may be COVID-positive. The usual health and safety mechanisms are not appropriate for addressing a problem of this magnitude and of this urgency.

We urge your government to take immediate action at this facility:

- Workers need the required PPE immediately to perform their jobs safely, including better access to masks, gowns and hand sanitizer.
- The failure of the employer to comply with minimum provincial directives as they relate to testing, cohorting and infection control create unmanageable demand on available PPE supply. Further, those minimum requirements outlined in the directives are not adequate for the circumstances of this outbreak and greater intervention is required.
- The residents and the workers need help. Adequate levels of care cannot be provided and the safety of residents cannot be assured in the face of this outbreak. Everyone's lives are at risk. Residents with COVID-19 should be moved to a different facility. They cannot be safely housed together at this location.
- Government intervention in the form of military aid is also an option that should be immediately deployed.

We expect the government to act immediately and prevent any more hardship for the workers and residents at this facility.

Sincerely,



JERRY DIAS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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cc. Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development Monte McNaughton; Minister of Health Christine Elliott