



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable Adrian Dix
Ministry of Health
Room 337, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
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February 4, 2021

Dear Minister Dix,

As we enter the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus continues to spread at a concerning rate and sadly, it is seniors in LTC facilities who continue to disproportionately lose their lives to this deadly disease. Meanwhile, LTC homes across B.C. have been operating their essential visitor policies differently in individual homes and Health Authorities due to an overall lack of policy standardization as highlighted in the Ernst & Young report that was completed in October of 2020 and only recently released by your government.

The report found that “Specific policy directives could sometimes be confusing, inconsistent, or lacking in detail, which led to operational variation, specifically related to PPE, IPC practices, single-site order policy and essential visitor policy and guidelines.” Despite revision to visitor guidelines released on January 7, 2021, the current policy remains open to interpretation by each Health Authority which will likely continue the operational inconsistencies that have been of particular concern to the families of long-term residents. In real terms, these discrepancies have resulted in a situation where some seniors in care were able to be visited more regularly than others, creating frustration and anger about the inequity and confusion.

We also know the pandemic is having a serious impact on our seniors — particularly when it comes to isolation — and that essential visitation is vital to the health of seniors. The B.C. Seniors Advocate has confirmed the seriousness of this situation, saying “People living in care homes are more afraid of dying of loneliness than of COVID-19...Facing a year or more before life gets back to normal is ‘sobering’ for long-term care residents, many of whom are in the last year or 18 months of their lives.”

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On behalf of the families and loved ones of those in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities, I'm calling upon your government to implement standardized guidelines for visitation, ensuring that there is an equitable approach across all long-term care homes and Health Authorities. We need to be doing everything we possibly can to support and care for long-term care residents and finding safe and innovative ways to allow for essential and social visits is critical.

I know we can all agree that protecting our most vulnerable citizens is a priority. It is long past time that the clarity and consistency of visitation policies that families and residents have been asking for and deserve is dealt with.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Shirley Bond
MLA, Prince George-Valemount
Leader of the Official Opposition