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March 2, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Re: Long-Term Care Homes

I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention an issue of critical importance to Halton Regional Council. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted residents in Long-Term Care homes and exposed the structural weaknesses in the Long-Term Care system.

In July 2020, the Provincial Government launched an independent commission to investigate COVID-19 spread within Long-Term Care homes, how residents, staff and families were impacted and the adequacy of measures taken by the province and other parties to prevent, isolate and contain the spread of the virus.

On January 29, 2021, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) provided a Board-approved submission, *Improving the Long-Term Care Outbreak Response in Ontario: Submission to the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission*, outlining recommendations to the Commission on behalf of the municipal governments that operate 100 of the 626 long-term care homes in Ontario. This submission put forward 48 recommendations for action in both public and private long-term care homes across nine themes.

Halton Regional Council endorses AMO's recommendations to the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission and strongly urges the Provincial Government to move forward with implementation of these recommendations, including instituting higher standards with increased funding to homes to implement those standards.

Halton Region is requesting that the Federal Government enhance federal health care funding to the Provinces and Territories, specifically dedicating funding to long-term care, and to undertake further efforts to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of Long-Term Care residents in Canada.

Halton Region is also requesting that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) develop a policy and advocacy position on enhanced federal support for long-term care.

Regional Municipality of Halton

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Accordingly, at its meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, the Halton Regional Council unanimously adopted the following resolution:

RESOLUTION: Long-Term Care Homes

WHEREAS residents and staff at long-term care (LTC) homes have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS in the first wave of the pandemic (March - July 2020) there were approximately 5,488 resident cases and 2,290 staff cases in Ontario and tragically 1,817 residents and seven staff lost their lives to this disease; and

WHEREAS on 15 April 2020, Premier Ford stated, "we will stop at nothing to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Today we are launching an all-out plan to fight COVID-19 in our long-term care homes. We will fortify the iron ring of protection around our long-term care residents and those who care for them. We'll go further in our testing, screening, surveillance, targeting the homes facing outbreaks"; and

WHEREAS there have been approximately 9,417 resident cases and 4,217 staff cases in Ontario in the second wave (2 September 2020-16 February 2021) and 1,869 residents and three staff lost their lives, representing an increase of resident deaths from the first to second wave; and

WHEREAS for-profit LTC homes have seen a disproportionate incidence of care failing to meet the standard of the Long-Term Care Act, which states that "...a long-term care home is primarily the home of its residents and is to be operated so that it is a place where they may live with dignity and in security, safety and comfort and have their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs adequately met"; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) report dated 20 May 2020 revealed conditions including inadequate staffing levels and training, limited medical supplies, unsafe medication administration, insufficient procedures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, poor infection prevention and control standards of practice, deficiencies in infrastructure and significant concerns about standards of care including seniors calling out for help, rotting food, missed meals, seniors left in soiled diapers and linens and cockroach and bug infestations; and

WHEREAS similar conditions were found in the second wave, including ongoing shortages of qualified, trained staff, ineffective use of PPE to prevent COVID-19 transmission, violation of protocols and practices including one instance in which residents who had tested positive for COVID-19 had their door handles removed, physical distancing and isolation challenges from continuing to house several residents in ward rooms with a shared bathroom and ongoing infection prevention and control standard concerns, all problems that were not fixed after the recommendations of the CAF;

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has launched an independent commission to investigate COVID-19 spread within LTC homes, how residents, staff and families were impacted and the adequacy of measures taken by the province and other parties to prevent, isolate and contain the spread; and

WHEREAS the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has provided a Board-approved submission, Improving the Long-Term Care Outbreak Response in Ontario: Submission to the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission, on 29 January 2021, outlining recommendations to the Commission on behalf of the municipal governments that operate 100 of the 626 long-term care homes in Ontario; and

WHEREAS AMO's submission puts forward 48 recommendations for action in both public and private long-term care homes across nine themes: Vision for Long-Term Care and Leadership Culture, Public Health and Safety, Planning and Communications, Staffing Measures, Care for Residents, Funding, Inspections - Enforcement and Compliance, and Mental Health and Well-Being; and

WHEREAS one of the key recommendations of the AMO submission is that the Ministry of Long-Term Care and Ministry of Health review the adequacy of infection prevention and control programs under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 in preventing and managing COVID-19 outbreaks, and to institute higher standards with increased funding to homes to implement these standards; and

WHEREAS the Canada Health Act's aim is to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada, and that the Federal Government provides health care funding to Provinces and Territories through the Canada Health Transfer; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government does not currently provide funding earmarked to support the LTC home sector, and;

WHEREAS the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) works with and advocates to the Federal Government to secure new tools and empower municipalities to build stronger communities; and

WHEREAS the operation of LTC homes is a municipal responsibility in Ontario but is of significance to the federal-municipal relationship.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT Halton Regional Council endorses AMO's recommendations contained in its submission to the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission;

THAT Halton Regional Council strongly urges the Provincial Government to move forward with implementation of these recommendations, including instituting higher standards with increased funding to homes to implement those standards;

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THAT Halton Region advocate to the Federal Government to enhance federal health care funding to the Provinces and Territories, specifically dedicating funding to long-term care, and to undertake further efforts to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of long-term care residents in Canada;

THAT Halton Region request FCM to develop a policy and advocacy position on enhanced federal support for long-term care;

THAT this resolution be sent to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Premier of Ontario, the Federal and Provincial Ministers of Health, and FCM for their immediate action and that a copy be sent to AMO, and Halton Members of Parliament and Provincial Parliament for their information;

AND that a copy of this resolution be sent to all Ontario upper-tier and single-tier municipalities for their endorsement.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this important issue, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Gary Carr
Regional Chair

- c. The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health
The Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Carole Saab, CEO, Federation of Canadian Municipalities
The Honourable Anita Anand, MP, Oakville
The Honourable Karina Gould, MP, Burlington
The Honourable Michael Chong, MP, Wellington-Halton Hills
Pam Damoff, MP, Oakville North-Burlington
Adam van Koevorden, MP, Milton
The Honourable Ted Arnott, MPP, Wellington-Halton Hills
Jane McKenna, MPP, Burlington
Parm Gill, MPP, Milton
Stephen Crawford, MPP, Oakville
Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP, Oakville North – Burlington
Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Brian Rosborough
Ontario Upper-Tier Municipalities
Ontario Single-Tier Municipalities