



Monday, March 30, 2020
Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

Thank you for your actions on price gouging, supply chain management and limiting gatherings to no more than five people in Ontario. These are important measures. I know things are moving quickly and there are new developments every day.

Ontario Liberals stand with you in doing whatever it takes to keep our people safe, and our economy strong. These are our shared priorities, now and always.

Yesterday, your government moved to suspend certain regulations under the Long-Term Care Act, expanding the potential workforce in long-term care homes. We've heard from nurses, PSWs as well as residents and their families concerned about the impact of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. As you know, there are outbreaks at several long-term care residences across the province, including, for example, one at Seven Oaks in Scarborough and another in Bobcaygeon.

In light of this, I want to share three recommendations specifically designed to protect frontline workers and residents in Ontario's long-term care homes:

1. Ensuring adequate supply and clear protocols of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the top concern for everyone in long-term care. As we suggested last week, the government will need to, at the very least, double the budget for PPE from \$75 million to \$150 million. This should be done immediately. The changes made to the supply chain of PPE are very important. They must be coupled with the long-term care homes being connected to those regional supply management tables. Due to high risk of the residents and staff, long-term care homes ought to be a priority when PPE supplies become available.
2. A \$4/hour wage enhancement for every worker in LTC for the next three months. Many care providers work in more than one care facility. The recommendation from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health limiting the number of facilities a worker can work in is creating difficult choices and financial hardship for care providers and their families. This measure will stabilize healthcare Human Resources and support healthcare workers and their families. It will also help to reduce the spread between facilities and in the community.
3. Mental Health and Well-being. Recognizing restrictions on family members to enter facilities at this time, providing a number of tablets for each LTC operation, so loved ones can talk to their families would help families stay connected, improve mental health and keep residents from feeling fully isolated.



In addition to these proposals which are specific to the long-term care sector, I am also asking you to consider three additional recommendations related to the broader healthcare sector:

1. Presumptive WSIB coverage for all healthcare workers impacted by COVID-19, including both physical and mental health supports. These workers are on the frontlines every day and they need to know that we have their backs.
2. Through the Command Table, the province should examine the feasibility and need to utilize our pool of foreign trained healthcare professions. There are 13,000 foreign educated doctors and 6,000 foreign educated nurses whose expertise can assist the province at this time. Other jurisdictions, like New York state, are taking this approach.
3. Through the Command Table, the province should examine the feasibility and need to mobilize a broader cross section of healthcare professionals. There are technicians and assistants trained in fields like dentistry, cosmetic surgery and veterinary medicine currently not working. Their experience and training may also be leveraged in some way to assist during this crisis.

Lastly, in light of the federal government's recent announcement relating to providing a 75% wage subsidy for workers, I once again encourage you to reconsider your initial decision and shut-down Ontario's construction sector in order to protect the health and safety of workers and their families. This measure would not impact construction work in truly essential areas, such as those focused on building or expanding health care facilities, for example.

There is currently a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty within the industry, and an across-the-board time-limited shutdown (as has been done with other sectors) would be extremely helpful at this time. Further, during this proposed temporary shutdown, the industry could be called upon to redeploy its inventory of PPE to front-line workers in the health-care system who are in desperate need.

I firmly believe that these recommendations will strengthen Ontario's response to COVID-19 and help to protect our most vulnerable. We must do more, quickly, to defeat COVID-19. We look forward to your response to these recommendations.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Del Duca'.

Steven Del Duca
Leader, Ontario Liberal Party