



May 5, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1  
[Premier@ontario.ca](mailto:Premier@ontario.ca)

Dear Premier,

**Re: Auditor General Report on Pandemic Readiness/Response in LTC:  
RTOERO Response to Ontario Government**

As a voice for healthy aging, RTOERO recognizes the importance of a long-term care (LTC) sector that truly safeguards the interests of residents. The April 28, 2021 report of Ontario's Auditor General highlights many shortcomings that led to an inadequate response to COVID-19 in LTC.

During the pandemic, the health care system has failed residents. LTC homes have been understaffed, understocked, unprepared, under-protected and under-serviced. Their personnel have been underpaid and under-skilled. The death rates from COVID have been especially high in privately-owned institutions.

If the same number of people who have died in LTC had died in child care or in schools, the institutions would have shut down. The government responses would likely have been very different. Indifference or inaction is ageism at its worst.

RTOERO represents 81,000+ members in districts across Canada, and is the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education community retirees. We want to ensure that our members, and all seniors, can live their best life as they age.

To protect the people who call LTC their home, we call for:

- a public inquiry into all aspects of how the LTC sector responded to COVID-19;
- immediate steps to improve conditions and inspections in long-term care homes;
- funding for more permanent staff in long-term care residences;
- limiting staff to working in only one nursing home;
- increasing wages, job security and benefits for staff (especially sick leave);
- a national plan for long-term care homes, with national standards and processes for robust accountability; and
- a transition to an entirely not-for-profit long-term care home model.



The pandemic has been a huge test of Canada's health care system overall. Sadly, in LTC, the system disappointed despite the heroic efforts of many dedicated health care professionals. This cannot continue.

It's clear that the infrastructures that support Canadians as they age need to be redesigned and re-engineered. Now is the time.

As the Auditor General's report stated: "Unfortunately, neither the Ministry of Long-Term Care, nor the long-term-care sector was sufficiently positioned, prepared or equipped to respond to the issues created by the pandemic in an effective and expedient way."

Many outcomes were avoidable, if only we had taken action sooner. There are no excuses for why we did not. The conditions that have allowed this have been presented to governments, in Ontario and across the country, over the past decades.

The consequences of inaction have been tragic. We must act with urgency, and put plans in motion to truly provide dignity and quality to the lives of older Canadians. The Ontario government cannot let them down.

RTOERO stands ready to assist all parties in the provincial government to create a new, more respectful and properly funded and managed long-term care system for our treasured Ontario elders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rich Prophet".

Rich Prophet, Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Grieve".

Jim Grieve, CEO