



A Note from our CEO

June 1, 2020

I realize how deeply upsetting it was to read the news coverage last week of the report by the Canadian Armed Forces on five of Ontario's long term care homes. The report raised serious concerns about infection control practices and safety in these homes. These are not Chartwell homes.

During this pandemic, all Chartwell staff have demonstrated incredible commitment and selfless dedication to the safety, well-being and care of our residents. They have always put our residents first. Our regional and corporate teams have worked around the clock to provide guidance, direction and support so our residence teams can fully focus on delivering direct support and care to our residents.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chartwell moved quickly to enhance our infection control practices and prioritized staffing by launching a recruitment campaign and working with various staffing agencies and other health care system partners. We have subsequently hired over 1,300 new employees during COVID-19. We implemented new monitoring and screening protocols and made personal protective equipment (PPE) available and mandatory for our staff even before it was directed by the government in most provinces.

90% of Chartwell's homes are retirement residences. While some of our retirement residences have experienced COVID-19 outbreaks, defined as one positive case or more, the impact of such outbreaks in long term care residences has been much more profound. The systemic legacy issues of the long term care system, primarily in older residences with a large number of two and four-bed rooms, which represent almost 40% of all Ontario LTC capacity, have made infection control much more challenging.

This virus is something the world has not seen before. It is extremely contagious and especially dangerous for people with pre-existing medical conditions and compromised immune systems. This is the profile of many long term care residents. I am sorry that despite all of our efforts, we were unable to protect all of our residents from this harmful virus and my sympathy and thoughts are with those families who have lost a loved one to COVID-19. I know all of our staff share in this grief.

It is because of the sustained and extraordinary efforts of our people, our operations team's leadership and the quality of our operating processes, that 48 of our residences, including 14 Ontario long term care residences, that have had COVID-19 outbreaks have now cleared the incubation period with no further cases noted. At this time, 16 of our residences, including 4 long-term care residences, are still in outbreak.

These are exceptional times and they call for exceptional commitment, effort, care and compassion. I've never been more proud of our people, their dedication and sacrifice to do what's right. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Unfortunately, this virus will continue to be with us for a while yet. We are determined to continue to do what needs to be done to keep our staff and residents safe, to continue to learn from our experience and to adapt and improve our practices. We welcome the Ontario government's decision to launch an urgent Commission to explore long-standing systemic issues in long term care. We, along with the Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA), call on the government to also address the immediate need for short-term solutions including more personal protective equipment and rapid testing, making the necessary investments in older homes to enable more effective infection control required for COVID-19 response, continuing human resource flexibility and expediting capital redevelopment funding.

Vlad Volodarski
Chief Executive Officer