

June 1, 2020

To  
Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health  
Health Canada

Hon. Deb Schulte, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Seniors  
Employment and Social Development Canada

**Subject: Improving Long-term Care for People in Canada**

Dear Minister Hajdu and Minister Schulte,

We are writing to you with **recommendations for responding to the staggering effects COVID-19 has had on our health-care system, particularly in long-term care (LTC) homes across Canada**. These recommendations were recently unveiled by the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) on May 27 through a report entitled **2020 Vision: Improving Long-term Care for People in Canada** (attached to this letter). We invite you to read it and consider the proposals we are bringing forward.

As you know, Canada has had unacceptable rates of COVID-19-related deaths in LTC; by late April, 79% of the country's deaths due to COVID-19 were linked to outbreaks in these homes. These tragic numbers are in part a result of decades of neglect of the LTC sector and a growing mismatch between the level of care required by people living in those settings, and the level of care available. Furthermore, the recent reports from the military deployed to Ontario and Quebec's long-term care homes have emphasized the shocking and horrific conditions that exist in some nursing homes in Canada.

We applaud the Prime Minister's recent commitment to work closely and support the province's efforts to improve standards of care for older people in long-term care

homes across the country. Moreover, further decisive action needs to be undertaken. To address the flaws COVID-19 has revealed in the support and care systems available to Canada's older people, we recommend that your Government take immediate action on three important fronts:

- The Government of Canada should immediately **appoint a commission of inquiry on aging**;
- Federal public health leaders must work with provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments and public health leaders to **review the country's COVID-19 response and organize preparations for the next pandemic**;
- Federal, provincial and territorial governments **must increase investments in community, home and residential care** to meet the needs of our aging population.

As the Prime Minister indicated last week, providing support in the short term and having broader discussions in the long term is critical. We believe many solutions can be put in place now in some long-term care homes if they had better funding, for example. In the long term, a deeper look to identify the best models for delivering better health and social services will support safe and dignified aging for every person in Canada.

We recognize the challenges involved to address the issues in the support and care systems for older people in Canada. The benefits of redesigning how we provide care for older people (Canada's largest growing demographic) and others with complex continuing care needs will go beyond improving their lives and health. A good long-term care system, in tandem with effective, well-organized community and home care, will ease pressure on the acute-care system and eliminate many of the gaps in the continuum of care that too often result in previously independent older people landing in the hospital or long-term care.

Acting on these three recommendations will help to provide a solid foundation on which to build a safe and dignified future for Canada's older people. Canada is known

for its humanitarian work around the world. It's time we brought those values home, to care for the people to whom this country and each one of us owes so much.

We look forward to discussing these proposals with you and your staff as soon as possible.

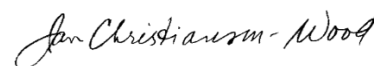
Sincerely,



**Claire Belker,**  
RN, MN, PhD, CCHN(C) President  
Canadian Nurses Association



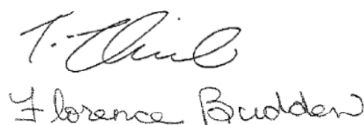
**Michelle Pavloff,**  
RN, BSN, MN, PhD(c) President,  
Canadian Association for Rural and Remote  
Nursing



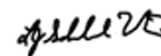
**Jan Christianson-Wood,**  
MCSW President  
Canadian Association of Social Workers



**Trina Klassen,**  
RN, BN, ASMH, Med President  
Canadian Family Practice Nurses  
Association



**Tracy Thiele,**  
RPN, MN, PhD(c) President,  
**Florence Budden,**  
BN, RN, CPMHN(C) Past President  
Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses



**Lori Schindel Martin,**  
RN, PHD President  
Canadian Gerontological Nursing  
Association



**Lea Bill,**  
RN, BScN, President  
Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association



**Sandy Buchman**  
MD CCFP (PC) FCFP President  
Canadian Medical Association



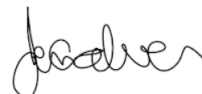
**Ian Culbert**  
Executive Director  
Canadian Public Health Association



**Miranda R Ferrier**  
National President  
Ontario Personal Support Workers  
Association  
Canadian Support Workers Association



**Francine Lemire,**  
MD CM, CCFP, FCFP, CAE, ICD, D  
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer  
College of Family Physicians of Canada



**Jen Calver,**  
RPN-GPNC(C), BAHSc (Hons), MHSc(c)  
Professional Advocacy Director  
Gerontological Nursing Association  
Ontario



**Lenora Brace,**  
MN, NP, President NPAC-AIIPC  
Nurse Practitioner Association of  
Canada