



February 25, 2021

Dear Residents, Families and Employees,

The toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on seniors, particularly in long term care, has been heartbreaking and galvanizing. The disproportionate impact of the virus on the elderly has elevated long-standing issues in the long term care sector, and generated a welcome – and overdue – sense of urgency amongst Canadians. We all want to understand what happened and the factors involved, so we can prepare for future pandemics. Data review is a critical part of this work, as it helps to identify both the right areas of focus, as well as red herrings that simply aren't borne out.

That's why last Fall, Revera engaged an independent Expert Advisory Panel, comprised of external leaders in a variety of health and related fields and chaired by Dr. Bob Bell, former Ontario Deputy Minister of Health and former President and CEO of University Health Network. Based on a review of reams of Revera data, as well as the background and history of the company's response to COVID-19 during Wave 1, the Panel released its findings in a report entitled "[The Perfect Storm: The COVID-19 Experience for Revera and the Long Term Care Sector](#)," in December of 2020. Among the key findings – community prevalence was a key driver of infection rates, and, once the virus entered a home, the risk of it spreading depended, in part, on the age of the building.

As the Expert Advisory Panel began its work looking specifically at Revera data, the Ontario Government also announced the launch of an independent commission to investigate COVID-19's spread and impact in long term care homes across Ontario. Over the past several months, the Commission has heard testimony from a wide variety of individuals and groups, including residents, families, medical, geriatric and long term care experts, stakeholder groups, and sector organizations (I was part of the team that spoke on behalf of Revera). Revera has already implemented the recommendations from the Commission's Interim Report released October 23rd, 2020, and we look forward to its final Report, which is expected to be submitted by April 30th, 2021.

Recently, on Friday, February 19th, the Commission heard from Michael Hillmer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Capacity Planning and Analytics, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. You can read the full transcript of Mr. Hillmer's testimony [here](#). He and his team have closely examined data from both Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the pandemic in long term care homes, and have also looked at the data from the lens of ownership model – privately-owned homes, not-for-profit homes and municipally-owned homes.

Similar to the Revera Expert Panel Report, the Government's data review shows that community spread is "the single biggest determinant of whether you have an outbreak." The review also echoes the Expert Panel's finding that homes with the older design standard were at an increased extent of an outbreak (but not whether the home went into outbreak to begin with). In terms of profit vs not-for-profit status and the impact overall through Wave 1 and 2, Mr. Hillmer concluded that ownership model is not a factor "in outbreak, speed or mortality."



The data, the science, is telling us where we need to focus. We need to focus on reducing community spread through infection prevention and control practices, surveillance testing for asymptomatic carriers and vaccination efforts. We need to accelerate the redevelopment of aging long term care homes that have ward-style rooms and aging infrastructure that is not ideally suited for increasingly frail seniors and for pandemic conditions.

We need to *stop* focusing on the for-profit vs not-for-profit debate. It is a distraction from the real issues and it is not supported by data.

One thing all Canadians can agree on is that the elderly in care deserve a safe, caring and comfortable environment. We will continue to participate in discussions and research about how best we can contribute to doing that, now and in the future.

Be well. Stay safe. Stay strong. Wear a mask.

Sincerely,

Thomas Wellner, President & CEO, Revera Inc