Date: March 30, 2020

Dear Family Members,

We at Holland Christian Homes continue to take strict measures to minimize the risk of COVID-19 coming to our home. The administration and medical staff have been working very closely to ensure that the best practices are being implemented from learning from Long-Term Care homes throughout Canada. The purpose of this letter is to let you know what the physicians at LTC homes across Canada have been learning about COVID-19 infections in the elderly and about our plans in case the infection does come to Holland Christian Homes.

COVID-19 is a virus that causes a wide range of illness, from being as mild as a common cold to causing respiratory (lung) failure and death. As you have no doubt heard, the illness is more likely to be fatal in elderly people, especially in those who already have other illnesses. Specifically, this illness is most dangerous to patients who are greater than 85 years old. However, even among elderly people living in nursing homes, many who become infected with COVID-19 will survive it.

The severity of an individual's COVID-19 infection has nothing to do with how early it is diagnosed or with the medical treatments given in hospital. It is simply how the virus affects their body. Elderly people who get the infection will likely need medication to treat fever, possibly assistance to eat and drink, and some will need oxygen therapy. All this is best provided by people who know them and in the familiar environment of their home, rather than in a hospital.

If these treatments are not enough, it means the elder has a very severe infection and they are not likely to survive. We have discussed this with hospital physicians and they have told us that there is nothing else that can be offered in hospital that will improve survival in this situation. As of now, there are no antivirals being used for COVID-19 in Ontario hospitals, although research is currently underway. The next step in treatment in hospital would
be to put the patient on a ventilator, and this has an extremely poor outcome for elderly patients, particularly for this illness. To be very clear, we are NOT withholding ventilators from frail elderly COVID-19 patients because we want to save ventilators for younger, healthier patients. We are protecting patients from harm and suffering that would truly be without any benefit.

What this means is that if your loved one does contract COVID-19, we will care for them and monitor their symptoms carefully. If they do develop severe disease in their lungs, this will happen within the first 14 days of illness, and we are prepared to treat them with comfort care. We have medications that can treat any symptoms that they may have and we will do everything we can to make their passing as comfortable as possible. Although we are strictly restricting visitors at this time to prevent COVID-19 from entering Holland Christian Homes, we will make exceptions for family visiting patients who are dying, provided there is enough personal protective equipment supply (masks, gloves, gowns) to accommodate visitors and to prevent transmission.

We know this is a frightening time for many of you, and we hope this information provides you some reassurance that the disease is perhaps a little less dangerous than you thought and that, if your loved one is one of the unfortunates who do succumb to it, we are prepared to keep them comfortable at end of life.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jobin Varughese  
Medical Director, Faith Manor

Dr. Amrit Singh Thind  
Medical Director, Grace Manor

Kaitlan Laviolette  
Nurse Practitioner