



March 13, 2020

To the valued members of our St. Pat's team

I am writing to you today to express my thanks for your ongoing commitment to the health and well-being of the residents of St. Pat's. At this time, we are at the beginning of a journey we have not traveled before. The WHO has declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Long term care facilities in both British Columbia and Washington state are in the midst of tackling the reality of this pandemic and I would like to keep you informed about the steps we are taking at St. Pat's to keep you and our residents healthy and safe.

The COVID-19 virus appears to be particularly dangerous to the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. This describes our entire resident population at St. Pat's as well as some of our staff, volunteers and families. While the situation is evolving rapidly and we are learning new information every day, what we have learned so far from the experience of other care facilities is that **our best protection is prevention**. Similarly, to other respiratory infections, COVID-19 is spread by droplets that are sent into the air and onto surfaces when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Most cases in Canada are stemming from travel abroad. As our residents are not travelling abroad their risk comes from those entering the facility with coughs and colds and passing on the virus.

At this time and at the direction of the Ministry of Long-Term Care we have instituted active screening of ALL individuals entering St. Pat's. Please keep in mind this guidance may change with very little notice. Please be prepared to answer the screening questions every time you enter the home. Most importantly we are communicating the following to all families, visitors, volunteers and staff:

DO NOT ENTER THE HOME IF YOU ARE SICK

While this is not a new message this is particularly important in light of COVID-19. If the virus begins to spread locally, that is from person-to-person in the community and not only between close contacts, the hospital system will quickly be overwhelmed. Should this occur, accessing the hospital for any services will become very limited.

At this time Ottawa Public Health is advising recently returned travelers from ANY international destination, including the United States, to self-monitor for 14 days upon their return for any symptoms of respiratory infection. Please be aware that this guidance may change suddenly. Should you or someone you traveled with become ill, contact your physician or Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 directly for further guidance.

We are also monitoring the recommendations from the Ministry of Health with regards to personal protective equipment (PPE). At this time, we continue to use droplet precautions for all new acute respiratory infections identified in our residents (mask with face shield, gown and gloves). **Please remember to isolate residents for observation as soon as they exhibit ANY sign of illness and initiate PPE immediately.** Remember, PPE is very effective when used properly to prevent the spread of illness from a sick resident to a person providing direct care (within 2 meters of the resident). If needed, please ask for a refresher on how to put on and take off PPE properly to protect yourself, your close contacts and the other residents you care for. Please take the time to use PPE properly.

Our residents need you to remain healthy in order for them to remain healthy.

If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to your managers or human resources. The team is here to support you during these challenging times. This situation is changing rapidly and we are committed to keeping you updated. Please check the St. Patrick's Home website as it will be updated with the most recent information about how we are addressing COVID-19:

<http://stpats.ca/covid-19/>

Please remember the following:

- wash your hands (remember alcohol hand rub is only effective if it stays wet on your hands for 15 seconds)
- use PPE appropriately (PPE should only be worn INSIDE a sick resident's room)
- **please do NOT come to work if you are sick.**

Thank you for your extraordinary commitment to St. Pat's and our residents during this extraordinary time. Please look after yourselves, your families and one another.

With thanks for your tireless efforts,

Dr. Celeste Fung