



## After the Outbreak: Balancing Benefits and Risks during a Pandemic

May 26, 2020 – Ottawa, Ontario

The COVID-19 outbreak was declared over at the Perley Rideau at 11:59 pm on May 25th, the 40th day since a staff member tested positive for the virus.

During the outbreak, 55 individuals – residents and staff – tested positive for COVID-19. Of the 21 residents with the virus, 10 recovered and 11 passed away. On behalf of the entire Perley Rideau community, I express our deepest sympathies to the families, friends and caregivers of those residents. During this outbreak, 34 staff members tested positive for the virus, all recovered and were warmly welcomed back to the Perley Rideau community.

More than a month ago, the Government of Ontario ordered all long-term care homes to ban non-essential visitors as one of many measures designed to stop community spread of COVID-19. Now that our residents and staff are free of COVID-19 and some community restrictions are beginning to lift, the no-visitors policy is increasingly being questioned. In many ways, visitation policies touch on the fundamental challenge of long-term care: maximizing residents' quality of life while protecting the health of both residents and staff.

There is no doubt that visits from family, friends and volunteers make an essential contribution to the health and well-being of residents. These visits also benefit our staff and form the fabric of our vibrant seniors' village. However, the vulnerability of our residents requires us to manage visitation with extreme caution while adhering to provincial guidance. Today, visitation is restricted to only very ill residents at end of life and limited to one person at a time wearing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

During this outbreak, the first six residents to test positive for the virus did not exhibit any symptoms; an invisible enemy had to be confronted. The virus continues to spread outside our village. The fact is: although we long for the days of open visitor access and extended stays, this virus will be with us for some time and it is unlikely that we will be able to freely welcome visitors again in the near future.

What is certain, however, is that we will continue to work with government to develop our visitation policy as we learn more about COVID-19 and how to contain it effectively. To do so, we will follow our standard approach: respect the law and government guidelines, and consult closely with medical officials and our community. Three independent Councils – Family and Friends, Veteran Residents, and Community Residents – facilitate our community consultations. We are thankful for the wisdom, perspective and feedback each Council provides on a wide range of policies and initiatives. The Perley Rideau's relationship with these Councils is part of what sets us apart.

A growing research capacity also sets us apart. Last year, we established the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™ to lead and disseminate much-needed research in how to care for Canada's burgeoning population of frail seniors. The Centre of Excellence is leading a research project into the impacts of social isolation on frail seniors during the pandemic and this work will help inform our decisions and guide our actions.



On this first post-COVID-19 day, our community will take the time to remember and grieve for the residents we lost to this virus. We will reflect on a hard-fought battle in a long and drawn out war. I'm proud of how the Perley Rideau community – residents, staff, as well as their families and friends – continues to pull together during this extraordinary time.

Guided by the members of the Command Centre and supported by our Board of Directors, we will continue to plan, adapt and implement for this new, next phase. I commit to keep families and supporters frequently updated.

I thank you for your comments and encourage your questions and feedback in the days ahead. By continuing to work together, I'm confident that we will emerge from this stronger – and wiser.

Noteworthy changes now that the outbreak has ended:

- While continuing to respect social distancing, residents will be able to move freely throughout the courtyards and the Health Centre, including the cafeteria;
- Dining room meals will resume for all residents on a staggered schedule to maintain social distancing.

Please watch a video honouring the end of the outbreak including a message from Music Therapist Kelsea Harris and a congratulations to staff from Kris Birchard, Chair of the Board of Directors of The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. (<https://bit.ly/3c5vpdB>)

Sincerely,

Akos Hoffer, CEO

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre

**Questions may be directed to Jay Innes, Director of Communications,  
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The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre is one of the largest and most progressive long-term care homes in Ontario. In addition to the 450 long-term care beds for Veterans and members of the public, the Perley Rideau campus includes a Seniors Village with 139 independent-living apartments. It employs a staff of more than 850.