

## **Action for Reform of Residential Care (ARRC) Supports the British Medical Journal's Call for National Inquiry into Canada's Covid-19 Response**

Covid-19 exposed in the most horrific way the long-standing systemic issues in the Long-Term Care (LTC) sector and exacerbated them, says Penny MacCourt of Action for Reform of Residential Care (ARRC) BC. Canada's response to the pandemic in LTC facilities was late, piecemeal, inconsistent and a national shame. Fifty thousand Canadians in LTC settings lost their lives in what the British Medical Journal authors have called death traps.

The pandemic is past but what has changed in the LTC sector? ARRC network members have observed that issues such as training and support for staff on the front line, as well as staff shortages, remain chronic, negatively affecting resident care and quality of life. The use of private agency staff, moving from facility to facility, has increased in BC.

The journalists and advocates who authored the BMJ articles are calling for a National Inquiry, led by a Multidisciplinary Review Panel that includes health experts and Canadians from all walks of life, to examine how Canada's Covid-19 response failed LTC residents. Such an inquiry, says Penny MacCourt, would look at the impact that under funding, lack of resources, inadequate monitoring of care, care-for-profit and ageism had on the devastating impact of the pandemic in LTC. A National Inquiry aligns with ARRC's request to BC's Health Minister Dix to appoint a Muti-Sectoral Advisory Forum to develop and guide implementation of an evidence-informed plan to reform LTC so that residents receive quality person-centred care from staff who are trained, supported and in sufficient number, in environments that support quality of life and welcomes family.

If the death of fifty thousand LTC residents does not lead to a National Inquiry and to full scale reform of the LTC sector, what will? ARRC urges the Federal Government to initiate a National Inquiry into Canada's Covid-19 response and to address, with the provinces, the related underlying structural and systemic issues. Refusing to tackle this shameful situation or passing the buck from one level of government to another is totally unacceptable, and fails to respect the significant, lifelong contributions of older Canadians in the final months and years of their lives.

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