



A Reflective Anniversary

Soo Wong, Executive Director

March 9th marks a special anniversary at the Bennett Centre Long-Term Care. It was a year ago when the Home enacted the COVID-19 Pandemic Plan, that continued to evolve during the past year.

As I reflect on the past year, I am inspired by the dedicated, hardworking and determined staff from all departments at the Home, in ensuring COVID-19 did not enter the Home. I am particularly proud and grateful to all staff for supporting, collaborating, caring, and making personal sacrifices to ensure our residents, families and one another were safe during the past year. I am especially thankful to the staff and families for believing in the Leadership Team and supporting the policies and actions taken throughout the Pandemic.

The Home's success in managing the COVID-19 Pandemic focused on the following: Leadership Team acted early to address the Pandemic. We started almost two weeks before the Province announced the Pandemic. The Home also began stockpiling our PPE supplies early. At one point, we sought donations from the community on personal protective equipment (PPE) items (masks, hand sanitizer, gloves). The Home also enacted the Policy early in restricting staff from working in more than one long-term care facilities and restricting the visitor's policy.

The Leadership Team spent many hours reviewing and re-reading the Ministry's many Directives then translating them into simple, user-friendly documents to share with staff, residents and families. Throughout the past year, the Leadership Team ensured both staff and families were informed through the weekly COVID-19 Update, Family Teleconference, staff daily/weekly COVID-briefing, weekly PPE training, and Town Hall Meetings. The Leadership Team also created the COVID binder, kept at the nursing station to keep staff and students informed on the latest COVID data and development at the Home.

The Home experienced and overcame many challenges including shortage of staff, accessing our vendors to secure various PPE supplies, overpricing of PPE products like surgical masks and hand sanitizer. There were many moments of fear, anxiety and stress during the past year. These included, the false positive COVID test by one staff at the beginning of the Wave 1, effects of the facial masks on staff, securing special masks for staff who were sensitive to the surgical masks, having nursing students at the Home during the Pandemic, requiring staff to have a weekly COVID test, implementing

the Rapid Antigen Test, ongoing reporting to the Ministry, completing daily audits, and executing the various new Ministry Directives/Regulations.

There were many unforgettable lessons learned during the past year. Especially those of Staff and families reaching out or stepping up to support one another throughout the Pandemic. Bennett families came together to celebrate the 2020 Nurses' Week. Every day during that week, families honoured all Bennett staff. We saw families and the community's kindness and generosity toward Bennett staff by regularly sending thank you cards, providing lunches, coffee and donuts to the Home, school age children performing Christmas Carols outside during Christmas, an antique car show, and First Responders visit. Staff also came together to create the monthly Spirit Day, where staff have an opportunity to have fun, laughter and sing!

We can not forget the fears, losses and sufferings during the past year. Whether they be personal human touch and connection, economic losses, human suffering caused by the virus, loneliness throughout the Pandemic, stresses of the ongoing transmission of the various variants, and fear of the COVID vaccine.

The Pandemic also provided new opportunities, hope and gratitude. Opportunities for Bennett staff to shine during the most difficulty time. The new opportunities through technology (facetime, Zoom, virtual meetings) to communicate with families and external partners. The discovery of the new vaccine in record time creates hope for all of us, especially when all levels of government and scientists are working together to ensure quick approval and safe administration of this vaccine to all Canadians. Finally, the COVID Pandemic produced a significant gratitude to all front-line healthcare and essential workers, for keeping our most vulnerable citizens and community safe!