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To: All Residents, Hospice Patients and Family Members

From: Ian Woodcock
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Date: April 9, 2020

Re: **COVID-19 – Second Open Letter to Residents, Hospice Patients and Family Members**

Since writing my last “Open Letter” dated March 22, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to evolve here in Alberta, across Canada and around the World. With this evolution have come some projections as to when the pandemic is expected to reach its peak - currently forecast in Alberta to be middle/late May. These same projections have also started to reveal positive indications that collective efforts to “flatten the curve” of the pandemic’s spread in Alberta are working. Regular hand washing, staying at home wherever possible, and practicing social distancing, are all essential protective measures that the vast majority of Albertans have embraced. These efforts not only serve to limit the transmission of COVID-19 and flatten its spread, they greatly contribute to limiting exposure to those who are the most vulnerable to serious illness should they become infected. This includes our residents and hospice patients, for whom our heroic staff have been doing an amazing job in keeping them safe and well-cared for during these unprecedented times.

Within the healthcare system in Alberta, much has also changed over past two to three weeks, as the provincial government and the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) continue to issue revised and additional Orders and directives intended to keep our residents and staff as safe as possible. What is most reassuring in this regard is that difficult choices and related safety measures undertaken by Intercare, as early as March 15, 2020, are completely aligned with the additional measures that have since been taken by the CMOH. This includes our decision to restrict visitation to all Intercare homes and stop access to family members and companions, except in the exceptional, extenuating, case by case circumstance involving the anticipated end of life of a resident (see CMOH Order - April 7, 2020 – Re: visitation restrictions at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-09-2020-2020-covid-19-response> and click on the attached PDF file of the full Order under “Resources”).

Intercare has also taken a “one employer only” position with all of our valued staff, such that they have been asked to choose whether they will stay with Intercare, as their one and only employer, for the remainder of the pandemic, or decide to work for another employer and take a leave of absence. We feel strongly that by limiting the movement of our staff between multiple employers and job sites, we can further limit potential exposure to COVID-19, while strengthening our efforts to keep our residents and staff as safe as possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize that the month of April represents the full arrival of Spring and with it, a sense of warmth and renewal as the snow and ice gradually thaw and melt away. With this renewal of the earth comes spiritual renewal as well, with countless Albertans celebrating spiritually significant occasions reflective of many religious faiths and traditions, including but not limited to: Christianity (Easter), Judaism (Passover) Islam (Ramadan), Sikh (Baisakhi), Buddhist (Theravada New Year) and Hinduism (Vishu). While we connect with family and friends from afar, and those nearby to celebrate, I want to encourage EVERYONE to use the safest approaches possible, including social media, video chats (e.g. Skype, ZOOM, Duo, Facetime, etc.), texting, phone calls, etc. If you are choosing to celebrate with a few others in person, please adhere to all Alberta Public Health Orders pertaining to gatherings (see: <https://www.alberta.ca/restrictions-on-gatherings.aspx>) and ALWAYS practice social distancing. We must all continue to do our part to “flatten the curve!”

Finally, I want to sincerely thank all of our residents, hospice patients, and family members who responded to my request in the first “Open Letter” to share examples and stories of our staff going above and beyond to help a resident, hospice patient or anyone else within our care homes during these challenging times. Since that time the response has been truly heartwarming! — we have received many stories of extraordinary kindness and caring that have provided inspiration and encouragement for all of us, who are proud to be a part of the 1,500+ strong Intercare family of employees. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to send us your letters, messages, feedback and stories, many of which have been posted on our web site at: [Words and Acts of Kindness](#).

With continued gratitude and appreciation for your kindness, understanding and support for Intercare, our leaders and staff during these extraordinary times,

Ian Woodcock, BSc, MHSA, CHE
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer