

# Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission Meeting

Group Meeting with Residents  
on Thursday, March 25, 2021



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MEETING OF THE LONG-TERM CARE COVID-19 COMMISSION

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--- Held via Zoom Videoconferencing, with all  
participants attending remotely, on the 25th day of  
March, 2021, 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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1 BEFORE:

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3 The Honourable Frank N. Marrocco, Commission Chair

4 Angela Coke, Commissioner

5 Dr. Jack Kitts, Commissioner

6

7

8 PRESENTERS:

9

10 LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS:

11 Beryl

12 Pam

13 Wilbert

14 Ethel

15 Eileen

16

17 PARTICIPANTS:

18

19 Ida Bianchi, Senior Legal Counsel, Long-Term Care

20 Commission Secretariat

21 Angeline Hawthorn, Senior Policy Analyst, Long-Term

22 Care Commission Secretariat

23 Rose Bianchini, Senior Policy Analyst, Long-Term

24 Care Commission Secretariat

25 Jay Bahal, Team Lead, Senior Policy Analyst,

1 Long-Term Care Commission Secretariat  
2 Dawn Palin Rokosh, Director, Operations, Long-Term  
3 Care Commission Secretariat  
4 Alison Drummond, Assistant Deputy Minister,  
5 Long-Term Care Commission Secretariat

6  
7 ALSO PRESENT:

8 Deana Santedicola, Stenographer/Transcriptionist  
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1 -- Upon commencing at 2:00 p.m.

2  
3 IDA BIANCHI: Good afternoon, everyone.

4 COMMISSION CHAIR FRANK MARROCCO:  
5 Hello, everyone.

6 IDA BIANCHI: Good afternoon,  
7 Commissioner Marrocco. My name is Ida Bianchi, and  
8 I am one of the lawyers at the Long-Term Care  
9 Commission, and I'll be facilitating today's  
10 meeting. I may be joined occasionally by my  
11 barking, miserable dog. He has a cone around his  
12 head, and he is totally miserable, but hopefully he  
13 won't be too much of a bother for us.

14 We really appreciate you coming today.  
15 Hearing from residents in long-term care is very  
16 important to help the Commission understand the  
17 firsthand experiences and the impact of COVID-19 in  
18 long-term care homes.

19 So we really appreciate your  
20 participation in today's session.

21 There are several other folks from the  
22 Commission who are joining us today, some of my  
23 colleagues, Dawn Palin Rokosh, the Director of  
24 Operations, Angeline Hawthorn and Rose Bianchini,  
25 who are both Senior Advisors, and also Alison

1 Drummond and Jay Bahal of the Commission.

2 All three Commissioners are here today.  
3 So the Commissioners are the head of the  
4 Commission, and they have heard all of the  
5 information and make the decisions about the  
6 recommendations they want to make and are currently  
7 writing the report. They are Dr. Jack Kitts, who  
8 is leading today's session, Commissioner Angela  
9 Coke, and Commissioner Frank Marrocco.

10 I would like to let you know that the  
11 session today is being recorded and a transcript of  
12 the session is being posted on our website. We  
13 would like to do that. We have done that with all  
14 of our sessions because we think it is really  
15 important for the public to know from you directly  
16 what your experience has been. And the best way  
17 for us to do that is to make your voice available  
18 in a transcript on our website.

19 You won't be referred by your full name  
20 on the transcript, but you will be referred to by  
21 your first name.

22 So without any further ado, I would  
23 like to turn this over to Commissioner Jack Kitts  
24 to open the session.

25 COMMISSIONER JACK KITTS: Well, thank

1 you very much, Ida, and thank you all for agreeing  
2 to join us this afternoon.

3 As Ida stated earlier, I am Jack Kitts,  
4 and I am one of the three Commissioners appointed  
5 by the provincial government. Joining me are our  
6 Chief Commissioner Frank Marrocco and our other  
7 Commissioner, my colleague Angela Coke.

8 As you are no doubt aware, this  
9 Commission was set up to investigate the spread of  
10 COVID-19 in long-term care homes and the impact it  
11 has had on residents like you, families, and staff.

12 Now, before we begin, I want to provide  
13 a bit of context about Commissions in general and  
14 our Commissions more specifically.

15 Governments will often set up  
16 Commissions of Inquiry after a tragic event has  
17 occurred. The purpose of a Commission is to  
18 investigate why the tragedy occurred and to make  
19 recommendations on how to prevent it from happening  
20 again.

21 Most Commissions begin their  
22 investigation after the tragedy is over. In our  
23 case, we are conducting our investigation as the  
24 crisis continues to unfold. Our final report and  
25 recommendations will be submitted to government at

1 the end of April, the end of next month. However,  
2 we have already submitted two interim letters of  
3 recommendations to government, and we believe they  
4 have helped manage the pandemic as it continues to  
5 unfold.

6 Our Commission is independent of  
7 government, but our role is to report our findings  
8 and recommendations to the government. The  
9 decision to accept and implement our  
10 recommendations is that of the government.

11 As I stated earlier, an important part  
12 of our investigation is to learn how residents,  
13 staff, and family members have been impacted by the  
14 spread of COVID-19 in long-term care homes. So  
15 today, we are asking you to help us understand the  
16 impact COVID-19 has had on you personally and tell  
17 us what you would recommend to prevent this tragedy  
18 from happening again.

19 We understand that many of you are  
20 perhaps a bit nervous about participating in the  
21 meeting, and we want you to know that we truly  
22 appreciate your courage in taking time to help us  
23 with this very important task.

24 Our hope is that the work of our  
25 Commission will help ensure that such a tragedy is

1 never repeated, and we believe that by sharing your  
2 stories you will help the public and government  
3 understand why it is so important that this never  
4 ever happens again.

5 Before we begin, I will ask you to join  
6 me in observing a moment of silence in memory of  
7 those residents and staff of long-term care homes  
8 who have lost their lives to COVID-19.

9 [Moment of Silence is Observed.]

10 Thank you, and now I will turn it back  
11 to Ida to facilitate the session.

12 Ida.

13 IDA BIANCHI: Thanks, Dr. Kitts.

14 I'll start with you, Beryl, if that is  
15 okay. You are on mute right now. Do you know how  
16 to switch yourself off mute?

17 Okay. Hi there.

18 BERYL: Hi.

19 IDA BIANCHI: How are you doing?

20 BERYL: Not too bad, not too bad at  
21 all.

22 IDA BIANCHI: I'll start with you, and  
23 I will ask you the first question, Beryl, okay?

24 What impact has COVID had on your life?  
25 Is there anything that could have made things

1 better for you and the other residents?

2 BERYL: The main impact is every day my  
3 son came in, and of course, that has been  
4 impossible. He has come to the window, but I miss  
5 that family touch. I don't know what else could be  
6 done, though. I am sure glad that I am here.

7 IDA BIANCHI: So do you feel, like, the  
8 staff at your home is caring for you?

9 BERYL: Oh, yes, definitely,  
10 definitely.

11 IDA BIANCHI: Great. Okay. Thank you.

12 BERYL: You are welcome.

13 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. Pam. Hi there.  
14 You are on mute as well, so you need to be unmuted.  
15 Do you need me to repeat the question, Pam?

16 PAM: Sure, go ahead.

17 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. What impact has  
18 COVID had on your life, and is there anything that  
19 could have made things better for you and the other  
20 residents?

21 PAM: My life is mostly relatives and  
22 family that I haven't seen for over a year. They  
23 are all out of town. I find I want to be in more  
24 now. I tend to be lazy. I had a bit of that to  
25 begin with, but now I feel like I just don't want

1 to do anything.

2 That is the main thing that it has done  
3 with me. And other than that, we have been treated  
4 very good here, but the food sometimes -- there was  
5 a little problem there. She didn't want to let us  
6 have coffee the first morning. Why? I have no  
7 idea. Stuff like this, you know.

8 But when you are locked in your room,  
9 it would be much nicer to have a nice meal, even if  
10 it is on the Styrofoam. When you feel like you are  
11 just -- if you have the same dessert twice, like I  
12 know that sounds petty, but when you are locked in  
13 your room, it means a lot, you know.

14 Sorry about the voice. I have a lung  
15 problem.

16 IDA BIANCHI: No, it doesn't petty to  
17 me at all. I don't like bad food either. I'm sure  
18 none of us does, so I -- and when you are locked in  
19 your room, I am sure that any small kindness or  
20 luxury would be much appreciated.

21 PAM: That is what I am trying to say,  
22 yes.

23 IDA BIANCHI: Yes, I understand.

24 PAM: That is all I have got to say  
25 about that.

1 IDA BIANCHI: Thanks, Pam.

2 PAM: Thank you.

3 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. I'll turn it over  
4 to Wilbert now. Hi, Wilbert.

5 WILBERT: Good afternoon.

6 IDA BIANCHI: Do you need me to repeat  
7 the question?

8 WILBERT: Not really.

9 IDA BIANCHI: Okay.

10 WILBERT: I would like to see a lot --  
11 and I believe that mostly everybody that is in a  
12 long-term care home, is more of a visit with their  
13 family. Right now they are choosing, like, two  
14 people to come in, and it is one at a time to  
15 visit, mother, father, or family, and apparently  
16 they just can't seem to get it together with their  
17 families at all because their families are arguing  
18 with one another who can go and who can't go, which  
19 is wrong. You are only allowed two people, which I  
20 believe is wrong.

21 We have been hit with this COVID in a  
22 very strong way. We shouldn't have been hit with  
23 it this hard if we would have known and had --  
24 communicating with other people to begin with.

25 Right now, everything seems to be set,

1 whether it is getting -- people cannot still see  
2 their families. Everyone who comes in, it is one  
3 person, and that person has to go out while another  
4 person comes in, and that's it. Those two people  
5 are the only two that can be chosen. There is  
6 people that have children, grandchildren, and  
7 whatever. They can't see these children at all.  
8 They cannot see their families at all. One at a  
9 time, two at a time, and that's it.

10           As far as the food goes in this place,  
11 I haven't seen - and I am not the only one about  
12 this here - a hot meal yet in this place.  
13 Everything is cold from morning to evening, and it  
14 is very bad. One week we had nothing but  
15 sandwiches, which was so far-fetched with these  
16 sandwiches. But it was food. But we had nothing  
17 that was hot -- since this thing has been going on,  
18 we haven't had a hot meal. And it was so bad, I  
19 even was hollering and screaming to people that we  
20 should have at least a hot soup, you know, and they  
21 are telling us that they can't do this here, they  
22 can't do that there because everything around here  
23 is steamed. Well, if it is steamed, it is steamed,  
24 but we don't get it hot. And by the time you get  
25 it delivered to your room, which you cannot choose

1 what you want to eat at the time because it is just  
2 there, we have no choice what to do, is just eat  
3 it.

4 IDA BIANCHI: Yeah.

5 WILBERT: And the staff cares. They  
6 are more than beautiful, as far as I'm concerned.  
7 You know, they have a lot of feelings for us all,  
8 so they feel very bad for us because we cannot see  
9 our families and that. A lot of the residents in  
10 here, I see -- I'm the President of the Residents'  
11 Council. I run around, and I see people crying. I  
12 have talked to people. A year or two years ago,  
13 they were in perfect shape. They could hold a  
14 conversation, and they could get around. They  
15 could do things. Now, they don't want to do  
16 anything. Not do they not only want to do nothing,  
17 they just can't seem to focus on anything anymore.

18 I have seen a lot of the friends of  
19 mine in here pass away, and it is not just COVID  
20 that really did it to them. It is very disturbing  
21 and upsetting.

22 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

23 WILBERT: And trying to do this in --  
24 what do you call this in? Zoom and that there, you  
25 see tears in their eyes. They are crying. I mean,

1 Zoom is nice. You cannot touch the person. You  
2 cannot feel and have feeling and everything on a  
3 Zoom. You know, it is something that is really  
4 disturbing, and it hurts.

5 I have seen 200-some-odd people in this  
6 here building, and the nurses, they can't make it  
7 better, but it seems like it hurts them too. They  
8 have worked so hard. I have seen PSWs go to a  
9 corner and cry because they can't do anything, and  
10 it is very, very bad.

11 I don't understand why they can't see  
12 this in the first place. You know, like, it is a  
13 thing that has happened out there. We never  
14 brought it into here. Why are we being punished?  
15 We can't go outside for air. Sometimes it is so  
16 cold or sometimes it is raining, but then when on a  
17 nice day when you do get the beautiful weather, it  
18 is -- like you can't go.

19 IDA BIANCHI: Is that because there is  
20 nobody there to take you? Why can't you go  
21 outside?

22 WILBERT: No, the thing is that you  
23 cannot -- you just can't go outside whenever you  
24 want to go outside. You know, like, you are lucky  
25 if you get the vitamin D, the sun, air, able to

1 talk to people. You can't. We had visits outside  
2 on the patio. What happens? They got to stand  
3 overtop of you with your visit or whatever, and is  
4 that a visit that you want with your family? We  
5 are being treated like we are in jail.

6 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

7 WILBERT: Which is very bad, you know,  
8 and I look at this, and I say I don't even want a  
9 visit because I feel like we are in prison. I have  
10 had two visits in a matter of, what, two years,  
11 three years.

12 IDA BIANCHI: Wow.

13 WILBERT: It is not two years. I'm  
14 sorry, from 2020 to now. It is really -- it is in  
15 a position where we are always being the ones that  
16 are being picked on.

17 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

18 WILBERT: I know we are residents in  
19 here, but why are we being picked on. Why is it  
20 that we have to do this, we gotta do that, we gotta  
21 do this. All the time it is us that is being  
22 picked on. We didn't cause this thing. We did not  
23 bring it into the building here because we didn't  
24 go anywhere to get it to bring it in. But  
25 everybody else has been bringing it in. You know,

1 all these passing away all around us and everything  
2 else, how is it getting to us? When they do find  
3 out how it is getting to us, they blame us anyway.  
4 They lock us up because a PSW or a nurse has it.  
5 Why are we --

6 IDA BIANCHI: Wilbert, we have heard  
7 that from so many residents. You know, your voice  
8 is part of so many. It is a common theme  
9 unfortunately, and I'm very sorry that you and your  
10 residents are experiencing that. And it is nice to  
11 hear that you, as the head of the Residents'  
12 Council, are seeing yourself as a bit of an  
13 advocate for them and thanks for coming.

14 I am going to turn now to Ethel.

15 WILBERT: Thank you.

16 IDA BIANCHI: Thank you, Wilbert. I'll  
17 be back to you. Ethel, what impact has COVID had  
18 on your life?

19 ETHEL: It certainly narrowed it down.

20 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

21 ETHEL: It has taken away a good part  
22 of it, the freedom part of it. You are so  
23 restricted, you can't come and go at will. You  
24 can't see the people you would like to see. I am  
25 fortunate. I fought to have the right to bring my

1 sewing machine and my Cricut machine. It is  
2 overcrowded, that is fine, but I do have the  
3 ability to...[inaudible]...opportunity, and it  
4 gives you more of a feeling of being a real live  
5 person. Otherwise, you are just a fixture.

6 IDA BIANCHI: So you spend a lot of  
7 time on your sewing machine?

8 ETHEL: When I can.

9 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

10 ETHEL: I forget what I was going to  
11 say. I needed a wheelchair. I think it was last  
12 August I was first measured for the wheelchair. I  
13 finally got a wheelchair last Wednesday, the 11th,  
14 whatever day the 11th was, and I'm sitting in it  
15 now. It is propped up because everything is broken  
16 on it. It is a piece of junk.

17 STAFF SUPPORT: Because of COVID, we  
18 can't have the OT come in.

19 ETHEL: We can't have the people come  
20 in to measure, to check anything out. And they  
21 want \$5,800 for this piece of junk.

22 IDA BIANCHI: So you are having no  
23 occupational therapists come into the home?

24 STAFF SUPPORT: There is, like, a five-  
25 or six-month waiting list because of COVID, but

1 that was...[inaudible].

2 IDA BIANCHI: Sorry, we didn't hear  
3 you. Did you say there is a five to six-month  
4 wait?

5 STAFF SUPPORT: Yes, to get an  
6 occupational therapist to come into our home from  
7 our area because of COVID now. They have been so  
8 backed up that we are having some struggles with  
9 mobility equipment and getting the right people in.  
10 Right, Ethel?

11 ETHEL: Yeah.

12 IDA BIANCHI: And that is why it took  
13 so long to get your wheelchair, Ethel?

14 ETHEL: And it doesn't fit. It is a  
15 mess. And another thing I would like to mention  
16 is, when there is a death in the home, ordinarily  
17 you have a chance to say good-bye, a final farewell  
18 to your loved ones. There isn't room for it, for  
19 that final farewell here. Families don't get a  
20 chance to say good-bye. And that is important.

21 IDA BIANCHI: Yes, of course it is. It  
22 is really important.

23 ETHEL: And my youngest daughter is a  
24 funeral director, and she says, Mom, they are not  
25 just numbers. Those are people, and we have to

1 remember that and treat them like people, except  
2 all we have is a picture of the one who died on a  
3 billboard for a day or two, and after that,  
4 nothing. There is no mention whatsoever of that  
5 person then.

6 IDA BIANCHI: That is really hard. I'm  
7 sorry. I have lost a couple of people during  
8 COVID, and I have had to go to a live-streamed  
9 funeral, so I know that it is very difficult, and  
10 I'm sorry about that.

11 ETHEL: And another thing that upsets  
12 me is, when I came here, there was a hairdresser  
13 that you could see every Wednesday or Friday. Now,  
14 you might wait three to six months. I have seen  
15 one hairdresser now since COVID started, and you  
16 may not think it is important, but to a woman, it  
17 is. A hairdo gives you a new lease on life.

18 IDA BIANCHI: I agree.

19 ETHEL: And shopping, you can't go  
20 shopping.

21 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

22 ETHEL: It is easy to say I need such  
23 and such, but can someone else pick out for you  
24 what you would pick out for yourself?

25 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

1                   ETHEL: Could there not be an arranged  
2 shopping day?

3                   IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

4                   ETHEL: I don't know.

5                   IDA BIANCHI: And --

6                   ETHEL: And family -- I'm sorry to butt  
7 in.

8                   IDA BIANCHI: No, it is okay.

9                   ETHEL: And family -- if there is a  
10 special event in the family, the whole family  
11 should be able to celebrate. They can't. They  
12 can't all get together. A wedding, you can have  
13 five people or something. That takes care of the  
14 bride and groom and a couple of witnesses, and  
15 there is no room for family.

16                   IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

17                   ETHEL: They are little things, but  
18 they are not little.

19                   IDA BIANCHI: No. Okay. Thanks,  
20 Ethel. I am going to go over to Eileen now.  
21 Eileen, hi there. Would you like me to repeat the  
22 question for you?

23                   EILEEN: No, I think I know what you  
24 want.

25                   IDA BIANCHI: Okay.

1                   EILEEN: I have to admit that I am  
2 extremely fortunate. I am here not under a power  
3 of attorney but because I sold my house, and I can  
4 no longer drive because of sight problems. So I  
5 came in here originally as a transitional home, and  
6 then I decided to stay.

7                   And believe me, it has been a good  
8 thing that I did stay. We have been fortunate,  
9 extremely fortunate, that we haven't had COVID here  
10 barely at all. And so we were one of the first  
11 ones to get the shots. And we have all got our  
12 first and second shot.

13                   I came from a big family and, as the  
14 other people said, it is hard because nobody can  
15 come. One person can come in at a time, but I have  
16 cousins that stand outside the window, and we talk  
17 on the telephone to each other. But that is no fun  
18 either.

19                   IDA BIANCHI: No. So now that you are  
20 all vaccinated, are they loosening some of the  
21 restrictions yet? Are you able to go outside?

22                   EILEEN: No, and that bugs me. One  
23 lady once said, Couldn't you go on a shopping  
24 spree? No, because you go to a store and come  
25 back, you have to stay in quarantine for 14 more

1 days, even though I have had the shots.

2 IDA BIANCHI: And the whole house has  
3 had the shots? Every resident in your home has had  
4 the shots?

5 EILEEN: I believe so. There may be  
6 one that hasn't. We have all had the shots. And  
7 up until -- the biggest part of the COVID was sort  
8 of getting very bad, we had nothing here,  
9 absolutely nobody with COVID. I can't believe it.  
10 These other places that are terrible.

11 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

12 EILEEN: As far as food goes, well, you  
13 don't always like the food, but we do get hot soup  
14 almost every day, and we get a hot meal every day,  
15 and sometimes you get a sandwich for lunch, sure,  
16 why not, but I cannot believe that there would be a  
17 place where you had no hot meals.

18 IDA BIANCHI: No.

19 EILEEN: This is ridiculous. And the  
20 lady that ran this place before I came here had  
21 been here for many years, and she was a very strong  
22 advocate of keeping everything very clean and very  
23 disinfected, and I think that is what has held the  
24 COVID away from this place for as long as it did.

25 IDA BIANCHI: Right. Okay. Thanks,

1 Eileen. I am going to now turn to the second  
2 question, and I'll start from the beginning of the  
3 list again.

4 Beryl, that means you. Let me ask you  
5 the question. In your view, what is the most  
6 important thing that the Commissioners need to know  
7 as they consider making their recommendations?

8 BERYL: They need to know so many  
9 things, but I think, just lying here, I must be  
10 about the oldest one here, but we have to realize  
11 how serious this whole thing is. And if you are in  
12 a home like I am, we are so well looked after. We  
13 don't get one hot meal a day; we get two. I can't  
14 see what the complaint is.

15 You know, maybe it is the way I was  
16 brought up, which was not in Canada, I'm afraid.  
17 It was in Great Britain, and I lived all through  
18 the war. That was bad. This is worse because the  
19 restrictions are greater, but you learn to live  
20 with them. You have to, to survive. And I have  
21 survived.

22 IDA BIANCHI: Right. Is there anything  
23 else you want to say, Beryl?

24 BERYL: Yeah, I was wondering why we  
25 didn't have enough help? The girls here are run

1 off their feet. I mean, three girls to look after  
2 30-some people, that is pretty difficult, when I  
3 would say 7 out of 10 of them are suffering from  
4 Alzheimer's, and they don't understand.

5 IDA BIANCHI: Right.

6 BERYL: You have to --

7 IDA BIANCHI: We heard that a lot from  
8 many people we have spoken to. In fact, the  
9 Commissioners have already made recommendations  
10 about increasing staffing, so hopefully that will  
11 change soon enough, but it is important for us to  
12 know how truly bad it is.

13 And so 3 staff or 3 girls for 30 people  
14 sounds hard.

15 BERYL: They run their legs off.

16 IDA BIANCHI: Yes. Thanks, Beryl.

17 BERYL: Okay.

18 IDA BIANCHI: Pam, would you like me to  
19 repeat the question?

20 PAM: Yes, please.

21 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. So in your view,  
22 what is the most important thing that the  
23 Commissioners need to know as they consider their  
24 recommendations?

25 PAM: That residents are people. That

1 is what I find sometimes. They are just grouped  
2 as, Oh, the residents don't need this or the  
3 residents do need that. They are all individuals,  
4 and they all have needs. We have been very good  
5 through this. We have had no outbreak at all, very  
6 good, but we have been in our room nearly a year,  
7 and we can't go outside.

8           You know, it is tough, but it has to be  
9 done. I think the biggest thing is people miss  
10 their families and the contact with the outside  
11 world. I think that is about my biggest thing, but  
12 as far as the COVID goes, our place has done  
13 wonderful, wonderful throughout.

14           I think that is all --

15           IDA BIANCHI: Have you been vaccinated,  
16 Pam?

17           PAM: Yes, both needles.

18           IDA BIANCHI: Great.

19           PAM: Yes, all our residents have. Our  
20 staff has had one, I think. Yeah, just one, and  
21 they get another one in May? Hopefully in May.  
22 That will be four months, but that is what they  
23 have to do.

24           But at least we are done. You know, I  
25 know it doesn't prevent it, but it does back it off

1 a bit, like so you don't get it quite so bad.

2 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

3 PAM: But as far as where I am, it is  
4 pretty good. It is just the lack of contact with  
5 other people that is the big problem, and don't  
6 just say, Well, we'll use this again. We'll have  
7 yellow beans again today. We have them tomorrow,  
8 they won't remember. We had them yesterday, you  
9 know. So that type of thing. But we are people.  
10 That is all I want to say.

11 IDA BIANCHI: Thanks, Pam. Thank you  
12 very much.

13 PAM: Thank you.

14 IDA BIANCHI: Back over to you,  
15 Wilbert. You have to take yourself off mute,  
16 though. There we go.

17 WILBERT: Yes, okay.

18 IDA BIANCHI: Do you want me to repeat  
19 the question?

20 WILBERT: Please.

21 IDA BIANCHI: Okay.

22 WILBERT: I was focussing on the other  
23 ones.

24 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. In your view, what  
25 is the most important thing that the Commissioners

1 need to know as they consider their  
2 recommendations?

3 WILBERT: Consider that we are human  
4 beings, and we have needs too. Because of these  
5 needs and that, they have to realize that we are  
6 not the ones that are causing the problems that are  
7 out there. A thousand people don't get their  
8 shots, that is not our fault. We should be able to  
9 go out. We should be able to go to a store. We  
10 can't get a barber in here. We can't get anybody  
11 that comes in here at all. We are lucky to even  
12 have a doctor to come in here and even he hesitates  
13 to coming in here too because we had so much COVID.

14 They have got to realize that people  
15 that have needs have to have somebody come in here  
16 and take care of these things for us. Every time  
17 we want something, we have to say it is an  
18 emergency, an emergency, and we wait for months and  
19 months, just like the rest of them.

20 We have had -- when it came to giving  
21 us our shots, we got our shots. It was fine. And  
22 then they come up with, Oh, you still have to be  
23 swabbed and everything else, and you still --  
24 everybody else that has to come in has to be  
25 checked and swabbed and everything, even the ones

1 that have already had their shots still have to go  
2 through all the swabbing and everything.

3 It seems like this thing does not work,  
4 you know, because of the shots. It doesn't slow  
5 down. It just makes it even more and more -- you  
6 know, tightens up more and more all the time. Like  
7 we can't do nothing. You know, we have five floors  
8 here, and on each floor, we have approximately 54  
9 residents on each floor, three people on a floor --

10 IDA BIANCHI: But as the head of the  
11 Residents' Council, did the management explain to  
12 you why the restrictions have to be in place even  
13 though you have been vaccinated? Do you get  
14 communication like that from the management?

15 WILBERT: We have -- believe it or not,  
16 I believe we have the worst communicating team that  
17 there is in this building, because a lot of them,  
18 they don't communicate with one another. We find  
19 that, as residents in here, we don't get to know  
20 anything. I have to beg them to tell me something.  
21 You know, what is happening, which is wrong. We  
22 should be able to know what is happening in the  
23 place. We are walking around here, you know, with  
24 our heads in a cloud because we don't know what is  
25 going on.

1           And it is not right. And when you do  
2 ask about something, Well, we'll tell you later,  
3 or, you know, this and this and this and that. We  
4 don't get anywhere. I even gave them my number  
5 there for my -- text number and texting and  
6 everything, and it seems like they just don't want  
7 to let us know anything. Even the nurses and that,  
8 they don't know what has happened half the time.  
9 It is not right.

10           You know, and then when I say I would  
11 like to speak, Oh, well, it is the Commission.  
12 They are telling us what to do and all this there.  
13 I say, Okay, can I speak to Christine? Can I speak  
14 to somebody there personally? Can they come in and  
15 see what is happening in this here place? They  
16 won't. What can you do? We have got to sit back,  
17 sit in our rooms and stay there, and that is all  
18 there is to it. We come out. We can go outside.  
19 If you go outside, you have to be outside there  
20 where they can see you. If I go around the corner  
21 of the building, they don't see me, they come out  
22 and look for me. Why? I mean, like I'm not in a  
23 prison, you know.

24           I have been around this place back and  
25 forth a thousand and one times. You are not

1 allowed to go to a store to buy clothing. I have  
2 lost over a hundred pounds in this here place. I  
3 came here 300 pounds. I am now down to 200 pounds.  
4 I love the idea that I lost the weight. But now  
5 that I need clothes, I can't even go out and buy  
6 them because all the stuff I'm wearing has to be  
7 too big, and -- oh, well, you can order it through  
8 online or whatever. I don't know if you all have  
9 ordered stuff from online, but when you order  
10 something online, it is either you get it the right  
11 size or you get what you want or you send it back,  
12 and by the time you get it again, forget it.

13 Nobody wants to come into this here  
14 place. I says, Why? Well, because the Commission  
15 won't allow them to come into this here place. The  
16 health directors don't want them to come into this  
17 here place. You can't get a haircut. You can't  
18 get your nails cut. You can't get anything done  
19 here at all. So you sit that way.

20 I finally found a person, a nurse, a  
21 PSW, that can actually cut hair. That is how I got  
22 a haircut. If you had seen what my hair looked  
23 like before -- I don't know if you know Mod Squad,  
24 but I had a great big bunch of hair, and I had to  
25 get it all cut off. I just wanted it cut off.

1                   IDA BIANCHI: It is really too bad that  
2 we had this meeting after your haircut. I would  
3 have liked to see the Mod Squad.

4                   WILBERT: Oh, I have a painting of it,  
5 and I have pictures of it, so...

6                   But anyway, I would love to see  
7 something happen for the residents that are in the  
8 place. Honestly speaking, they have to have some  
9 kind of communication whatsoever with the staff  
10 here and their families. Believe me, this one  
11 family at a time or two families and one sits here  
12 and one sits there, that is not working, you know,  
13 and I am just tired of seeing -- like I said  
14 before, I am just tired of seeing people crying and  
15 wishing that they would rather die from COVID than,  
16 you know, not see their families. That is wrong.  
17 It is wrong for any human being.

18                   IDA BIANCHI: All right, Wilbert,  
19 thanks. I'm going to go to Ethel now. Thanks very  
20 much.

21                   Ethel?

22                   ETHEL: Well, I just want to repeat  
23 that people need to be treated like individuals,  
24 like people, not numbers. And I don't think I can  
25 put it any plainer than that.

1           IDA BIANCHI: Yes. That is a common  
2 theme today that we are hearing.

3           All right. Eileen, you get the last  
4 word. Would you like me to repeat the question?

5           EILEEN: No, thank you. I just want to  
6 reiterate what has been said many times before. We  
7 need more good workable staff. There are people  
8 here -- the PSWs and the other workers are at times  
9 way overworked. We have about 80 people in this  
10 place, and if you get two people to a floor, you  
11 are lucky.

12           IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

13           EILEEN: You can't do it with -- people  
14 are bedridden or stuck in a wheelchair like I am or  
15 maybe can't see or things like that. It is not  
16 fair to the staff to have to do the things they do  
17 and do so well.

18           And yet, I don't know, we can't -- you  
19 can't even get a cup of coffee sometimes.

20           IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

21           EILEEN: But that is not the staff's  
22 fault. It is just that there is --

23           IDA BIANCHI: You know, Eileen, we have  
24 had meetings with staff and a lot of them tell us  
25 how terribly they feel that they can't help more,

1 and what we have repeated to them is what many  
2 residents say, that the staff are great and are  
3 doing the best they can. And I hope that helped  
4 them feel a bit better.

5 EILEEN: But why doesn't the government  
6 listen?

7 IDA BIANCHI: Well, that would be --  
8 like I said earlier, we did make recommendations  
9 about staffing. The Commission made them early on,  
10 and so we hope the government will take action.  
11 They said they would.

12 EILEEN: Yeah, they said they would.  
13 Sorry, it doesn't go over with me.

14 IDA BIANCHI: Yes.

15 EILEEN: But anyway, the meals are  
16 good. The staff is working their hearts out, so  
17 don't blame them. Just blame everybody else.

18 IDA BIANCHI: All right.

19 Okay. Well, those are all the  
20 questions we have. If anyone wants to add  
21 anything, we have a little bit of extra time. I'm  
22 happy to do that. Otherwise, I'll turn it over to  
23 Commissioner Kitts.

24 STAFF SUPPORT: I think Wilbert --

25 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. Hi, Wilbert, did

1 you have more that you wanted to say?

2 WILBERT: I would like to know, can  
3 anything be done about visits and that there for  
4 the residents, this here one and two thing?  
5 Because, like, we have been vaccinated here, and I  
6 always thought that if -- I thought of an idea of  
7 saying, Okay, if the staff does not want to be  
8 vaccinated, they should not be allowed to come in  
9 and go to work here because you are jeopardizing  
10 everybody's life again in here and having this  
11 spread all over again.

12 So why is it that they can do that? If  
13 you don't get vaccinated, you should not be able to  
14 come into work. And I know it is not mandatory  
15 that you have it, but something can be done about  
16 it.

17 IDA BIANCHI: Well, the role of our  
18 Commission is to listen to what people in the  
19 system tell us, and we have done an investigation,  
20 and to prepare a report and recommendations. So  
21 what you have told us will help the Commissioners  
22 make their recommendations.

23 And, you know, we have already made  
24 recommendations about families coming in and  
25 staffing. Our final report is due out in April,

1 and we are hoping that it is a catalyst for people  
2 in the system to take action to make the lives of  
3 people who live in long-term care better, Wilbert.

4 So that is what we are going to do.

5 WILBERT: Thank you.

6 IDA BIANCHI: Okay. Does anyone else  
7 want to speak? It looks like -- Pam?

8 PAM: Thank you for giving us the  
9 opportunity to voice our concerns.

10 IDA BIANCHI: Well, thanks for coming.  
11 We need to hear this. It is important for the  
12 Commission's work.

13 PAM: Thank you very much for having  
14 this meeting. We get to air some of our problems.  
15 Thank you very much.

16 IDA BIANCHI: Thanks for coming. Thank  
17 you.

18 Commissioner Kitts.

19 COMMISSIONER JACK KITTS: Well, thank  
20 you very much, Ida, and thank you all, again, for  
21 sharing your experiences with us today.

22 I heard a lot of things that need to be  
23 changed to not have this happen again, but there  
24 are two themes that resonated strongly with me that  
25 came out of this discussion this afternoon.

1                   And the first is you need more good  
2 staff working in the homes, and I know I speak for  
3 the other Commissioners, we get that in spades and  
4 that is definitely going to be part of our report.

5                   The second one probably tells us why it  
6 is important to hear from you, because on the one  
7 hand you all said we have to be safe and,  
8 therefore, you know, the confinement and things,  
9 but what you said very clearly is don't forget that  
10 residents are people. And while locking us in a  
11 room and keeping us there until the pandemic passes  
12 might seem like a good idea to some, keep us safe  
13 and keep us from getting infected, but you have  
14 told us very clearly that residents are people and  
15 have basic human needs.

16                   And you summarized them under freedom.  
17 You know, the question you had was do we need to be  
18 locked in a room for months at a time, or is there  
19 some way we could have some freedom to perhaps even  
20 get a haircut or a hairdresser.

21                   You also told us the importance of  
22 family and not just one family member at a time,  
23 but having the family together and being able to  
24 touch. Human touch is so important for periods of  
25 isolation.

1           And you also told us that when you are  
2 so confined and everything, even the food doesn't  
3 come across as good, even though it might be.

4           And so what this leads to is the  
5 isolation and loneliness, and one of you - I think  
6 it was Ethel - said that you don't feel like a  
7 human being anymore. You feel like a fixture.

8           And so, Wilbert, to your question, we  
9 will certainly raise the fact that repeating the  
10 isolation and confinement and leading to loneliness  
11 in retrospect was not a good idea. Maybe it kept  
12 you safer, but I am sure that they now can look at  
13 other ways to do that.

14           So, you know, seeing this pandemic  
15 through your eyes and listening to your heartfelt  
16 messages has been really helpful in making the  
17 impact of this COVID-19 very real for all of us at  
18 the Commission, and we promise to submit a report  
19 that reflects your personal experiences and  
20 recommendations to the government so that they and  
21 the general public understand why this tragedy must  
22 never happen again.

23           So your presence today will help shape  
24 our report, and I want to end with a great big  
25 thank you for meeting with us and being so clear

1 with your experiences.

2 I hope you enjoy the rest of the day.  
3 Thank you.

4 WILBERT: And thank you all.

5 COMMISSIONER ANGELA COKE: Thank you  
6 very much.

7 WILBERT: And I hope we can do this  
8 again at a later date when things are getting a  
9 little better and updating you on everything.

10 COMMISSIONER JACK KITTS: Thank you.

11 WILBERT: Thank you very, very much.

12 IDA BIANCHI: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER ANGELA COKE: Thanks,  
14 everybody.

15 COMMISSIONER JACK KITTS: Bye-bye.

16

17 -- Adjourned at 2:49 p.m.

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2  
3 I, DEANA SANTEDICOLA, RPR, CRR,  
4 CSR, Certified Shorthand Reporter, certify:

5 That the foregoing proceedings were  
6 taken before me at the time and place therein set  
7 forth;

8 That all remarks made at the time  
9 were recorded stenographically by me and were  
10 thereafter transcribed;

11 That the foregoing is a true and  
12 correct transcript of my shorthand notes so taken.

13  
14  
15  
16 Dated this 25th day of March, 2021.

17  
18  
19  
20  
21 

22 NEESONS, A VERITEXT COMPANY

23 PER: DEANA SANTEDICOLA, RPR, CRR, CSR

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