

Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission Meeting

Group Meeting with Residents
on Thursday, April 1, 2021



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MEETING OF THE LONG-TERM CARE COVID-19 COMMISSION

--- Held via Zoom Videoconferencing, with all
participants attending remotely, on the 1st day of
April, 2021, 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

1 BEFORE :

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3 The Honourable Frank N. Marrocco, Commission Chair

4 Angela Coke, Commissioner

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7 PRESENTERS :

8

9 LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS :

10 Judy

11 Kaz

12 Cindy

13 Tom

14

15 PARTICIPANTS :

16

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

18 Commission Secretariat

19 Angeline Hawthorn, Senior Policy Analyst, Long-Term

20 Care Commission Secretariat

21 Rose Bianchini, Senior Policy Analyst, Long-Term

22 Care Commission Secretariat

23 Dawn Palin Rokosh, Director, Operations, Long-Term

24 Care Commission Secretariat

25 Derek Lett, Policy Director, Long-Term Care

1 Commission Secretariat
2 Jay Bahal, Team Lead, Senior Policy Analyst,
3 Long-Term Care Commission Secretariat

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6 ALSO PRESENT:
7 Deana Santedicola, Stenographer/Transcriptionist

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1 -- Upon commencing at 2:00 p.m.

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3 IDA BIANCHI: Good afternoon, everyone.
4 Good afternoon, Commissioner Coke and
5 Commissioner Marrocco.

6 And thanks very much to the residents
7 who have joined us, and that would be Tom, Kaz and
8 Judy. I know we are waiting for a couple more
9 people, but I am really glad to see you here today.

10 As you know, you are here to give your
11 thoughts to Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19
12 Commission, and in a way, you have the last word on
13 behalf of the residents because this is our final
14 session.

15 So we are very much looking forward to
16 hearing about your experiences during the pandemic,
17 as the Commissioners have found it of great value
18 to hear from those who were on the ground and
19 continue to be on the ground as the pandemic
20 unfolds.

21 So my name is Ida Bianchi, as Angeline
22 said. I am one of the lawyers of the Commission.
23 A number of my colleagues are sitting in to listen
24 to your stories, together with the Commissioners.

25 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Ida?

1 IDA BIANCHI: Sorry, Angeline, yes?

2 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: If I could pause
3 you, we just have one more resident who is coming
4 in, and so maybe we can repeat the opening remarks
5 when --

6 IDA BIANCHI: Yes, for sure.

7 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Let me just get
8 them in and settled.

9 IDA BIANCHI: Okay.

10 [Discussion off the record to admit a
11 new participant to the session.]

12 IDA BIANCHI: I'll just repeat a couple
13 of things for Cindy's behalf.

14 Hi, Cindy. I am Ida. I am one of the
15 lawyers at the Long-Term care Commission. Two of
16 the three Commissioners are here today,
17 Commissioner Angela Coke and Commissioner Frank
18 Marrocco.

19 I said to the other residents that this
20 is our last resident session, and so you in some
21 senses have the last word on behalf of the
22 residents. We have heard from a number of people
23 about their experiences during the pandemic. The
24 Commissioners have found that really important
25 information as they carry out their investigation

1 to hear from people who are living through it the
2 way you have and the way your family members and
3 the staff have.

4 There are a number of my colleagues
5 here who are supporting the meeting and are
6 listening in, together with the Commissioners, and
7 we are trying to do a kind of virtual roundtable
8 format. It certainly would be easier in some ways
9 if we were all in person. I know I would like that
10 better. But we are doing our best here to try to
11 emulate the connection we could feel if we were all
12 together.

13 I propose to go around, I guess around
14 the virtual room and call on each of you to answer
15 two questions.

16 But before I do that, I would like to
17 turn it over to Commissioner Angela Coke who will
18 say a few remarks to open the meeting.

19 COMMISSIONER ANGELA COKE: Okay, thank
20 you, Ida.

21 And good afternoon, everyone, and thank
22 you for participating in this meeting. My name is
23 Angela Coke. I am one of the Commissioners
24 appointed by the Government to lead this
25 Commission. We are joined by the Chair of our

1 Commission, Frank Marrocco. And Dr. Jack Kitts
2 couldn't be with us but sends his regrets.

3 Now, as you know, this independent
4 Commission was set up to investigate the spread of
5 COVID-19 in long-term care homes, including how
6 residents, staff and families were impacted.

7 Governments often set up Commissions or
8 Inquiries when tragic events occur, and their
9 purpose is to investigate what happened and why and
10 to make recommendations to ensure it does not
11 happen again.

12 Most Commissions and Inquiries are
13 established after a tragedy has occurred. Ours is
14 a little bit different in that we have been
15 carrying out our work during the ongoing pandemic.

16 As mentioned, one of the key issues
17 that we have been asked to investigate is how
18 residents, staff, family members and others were
19 impacted by the spread of COVID, and we have heard
20 from resident and family associations and union
21 representative about how devastating the impact of
22 the spread has been on residents, families and
23 staff. But as we have said, it is of critical
24 importance to hear directly from you, the
25 residents, and we appreciate very much your

1 participation in this meeting today.

2 Before I turn it back over to our
3 facilitators, I would ask you to join me in
4 observing a moment of silence for the residents and
5 staff of long-term care homes who have died from
6 COVID-19.

7 [Moment of Silence is observed.]

8 Thank you.

9 IDA BIANCHI: Thanks, Commissioner
10 Coke.

11 So I am going to start with you, Tom,
12 if you would like to take yourself off mute or if
13 Angeline can do that for you.

14 Hi, Tom, good afternoon.

15 TOM: Hi. Can you hear me?

16 IDA BIANCHI: I can. How are you?

17 TOM: Okay, I'm fine, thank you.

18 IDA BIANCHI: Good.

19 TOM: I am a resident here at
20 Woodingford Lodge in Tillsonburg, Ontario, and we
21 are a not-for-profit nursing home. Thank goodness,
22 I have to say, because as I watched this pandemic
23 go, at the start I was scheduled for cataract
24 surgery and I got my right eye done on March 10th,
25 and then we had the lockdown. And so I haven't got

1 my right eye done, but that is minor compared to
2 some of the things that have happened to the
3 people.

4 I used to live -- I lived for a year
5 and a half at Maple Manor Nursing Home here in
6 Tillsonburg, and I watched with dismay as the count
7 blew up at that nursing home. And I would just say
8 I think thank goodness that I came here, because
9 the thing I find is that Maple Manor, when I left,
10 they had 110 residents and I came here to
11 Tillsonburg with 35 residents. So they had triple
12 the residents, but they certainly did not have
13 triple the staff. The staff was spread too thinly,
14 and I felt so sorry for them. They are excellent
15 workers. They all -- they were doing a bang-up job
16 considering that they had to do three people's work
17 for one person's pay at that time.

18 We didn't have physical therapy. There
19 just wasn't -- you know, they were good workers,
20 but you try to stretch them out among the 110
21 people. And for doing basic care, they did their
22 best, but you know, when you try and stretch it
23 out, you only get so many minutes per person. And
24 that is why as soon as I heard that there was COVID
25 at Maple Manor, I started shuddering thinking that

1 this is going to turn out badly, and it did.

2 And here where I was, we had great
3 lockdown protocols. The whole gang was in on it.
4 They were all in on it, and it was well managed
5 from the very start right up to today.

6 Okay, I'll pass the ball on to you.
7 Any comments?

8 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: No, thank you so
9 much for that, Tom. That is great, super
10 appreciate your comments.

11 I think we have actually just lost Ida
12 momentarily, but what I will do is -- oh, there is
13 Ida. We have got her back.

14 IDA BIANCHI: Hi.

15 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: We just finished
16 hearing from Tom. So no worries. We have captured
17 his input on the transcript.

18 IDA BIANCHI: Okay, thanks.

19 Yes, and I realized as I was trying to
20 reconnect, I forgot to remind you that we are
21 transcribing this session, and we'll be putting the
22 transcript up on our website. That has been very
23 helpful for the public to understand what has been
24 going on inside the homes. And I don't know if you
25 have followed the news, but several news agencies

1 have picked up and amplified the voices of
2 residents, families and staff.

3 Thanks very much, Tom.

4 I am going to turn to Kaz next. Hi,
5 Kaz. I can start by asking you the -- I have a
6 question. Tom answered it without really being
7 asked the question, but I can ask you the question.

8 So the question is, What impact has
9 COVID-19 had on your life, and is there anything
10 that could have made things better for you and
11 other residents in your home?

12 And you are on mute, Kaz, and so you'll
13 have to unmute yourself.

14 KAZ: Okay, how is that?

15 IDA BIANCHI: That is great. Thank
16 you.

17 KAZ: Okay, what was the question
18 again?

19 IDA BIANCHI: What impact did COVID-19
20 have on your life, and is there anything that could
21 have made things better for you and other residents
22 in your home?

23 KAZ: Well, basically, it was very well
24 run here. Like I noticed, as I am looking at the
25 news and stop and seeing all these people all over

1 these old age homes getting sick and dying and
2 stuff, I am going, My God, why is that not
3 happening here?

4 And then I thought about it for awhile,
5 and I realized that it was the staff here, that
6 they were very - how to put it - they were very
7 careful. They taught you the right things.

8 The only bad thing I didn't like was
9 when you were quarantined, if I was living at home,
10 I would be quarantined to my whole house, right,
11 and backyard and stuff. Here I'm stuck in a 20 by
12 20 room --

13 IDA BIANCHI: Yeah.

14 KAZ: -- okay, when you are
15 quarantined.

16 So that is the only part that I didn't
17 like, but I understand why it was necessary and I
18 am glad it was done, because the end is around the
19 corner. I see it coming, especially now with all
20 the vaccines and everything.

21 IDA BIANCHI: Has everyone in your home
22 been vaccinated, Kaz?

23 KAZ: Yes, they have, that and staff
24 and everybody here has, yeah.

25 IDA BIANCHI: Wow, that is wonderful

1 news .

2 KAZ: So I am kind of excited about
3 that, because I know what is going to happen now.
4 Things are going to come back to normal when people
5 get vaccinated.

6 So everybody get vaccinated. If you
7 don't, well, you are hurting us, okay. You are
8 hurting us. And you know, like we are all
9 earthlings, you know, and so we have got to stick
10 together. Never mind the races and stuff, all the
11 stuff that you are seeing on TV, you know, with
12 Floyd and all of that. Like, I mean, come on, we
13 are earthlings and our home is burning. We've got
14 to come together to save earth. We are earthlings,
15 aren't we?

16 IDA BIANCHI: Yeah.

17 KAZ: That is the way I look at it. I
18 have to say that. I had to put that in there.

19 IDA BIANCHI: Of course.

20 KAZ: So, anyways, I don't know what
21 else to say, but I think it was very well handled
22 here. And I was surprised. Like I was expecting
23 to see the same thing I am seeing on the news, and
24 it wasn't happening. I'm going, My God, I don't
25 want to be in those homes. I'm lucky that I was

1 here. Everybody is lucky that they were here.

2 The only bad thing was being confined
3 to your room, as it's kind of small, but it is
4 understandable.

5 IDA BIANCHI: Well, you know, it is
6 great to hear good success stories as well as
7 hearing about the other stories, that there is good
8 news stories and good practices out there as we
9 move forward that people who run long-term care can
10 learn from.

11 KAZ: Yes, from us.

12 IDA BIANCHI: So thanks very much, Kaz.

13 KAZ: Okay, bye.

14 IDA BIANCHI: Great, thanks, bye-bye.
15 Judy.

16 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Judy, if it is
17 helpful, we can come back to you in a moment and
18 give you some time, and we can go to another
19 resident and ask them the question.

20 So why don't we go ahead and do that,
21 and hopefully someone can give you a hand to unmute
22 yourself.

23 And I am just going to let Ida back in
24 the room because it seems that she has dropped.
25 There we go.

1 But maybe I'll just continue on and
2 I'll ask another resident. Cindy, what impact has
3 COVID had on your life and is there anything that
4 could have made things better for you and the other
5 residents? Cindy, are you ready to answer the
6 question for us?

7 We just have you on mute, Cindy, if you
8 are able to unmute yourself.

9 KAZ: What was the question? All of a
10 sudden the screen went still, and it is not back to
11 normal, so --

12 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: I apologize for
13 that. Yes, it seems like Ida is having some
14 internet issues, so she has dropped off the call.

15 But I was directing the question at
16 Cindy. I see Cindy has herself on mute. If you
17 are able to unmute yourself, Cindy?

18 There we go. Hi, Cindy, would you like
19 me to repeat the question for you?

20 CINDY: Yes, please.

21 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Wonderful. Okay,
22 the question is, What impact has COVID had on your
23 life and is there anything that could have made
24 things better for you or other residents?

25 CINDY: Okay, I have been at

1 Extendicare York and I have been here for four
2 years, and when the pandemic hit, it was terrible.
3 It caused me not to be able to see my loved ones.
4 I had to stay inside the premises.

5 And as for the staff, I go along with
6 everybody else. The staff has gone above and
7 beyond. So if we didn't have the staff here, I
8 think we would have had COVID in here a long time
9 ago.

10 So I have to go along with everyone
11 else and give credit and give, you know, a shout
12 out to the staff because they have been fantastic.

13 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: That is so
14 wonderful to hear, Cindy. So is there anything
15 that you think could have made things better for
16 you?

17 CINDY: No, not really. I think it was
18 handled quite well here. Mind you, I can't wait
19 for this to all be over with so we can all get on
20 with our lives.

21 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Absolutely.

22 CINDY: And that's it, honey. That is
23 all I have to say.

24 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Well, thank you so
25 much, Cindy. That is really helpful. Thanks for

1 sharing that.

2 CINDY: You're welcome.

3 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: And I'll check in
4 with Judy here to see if she has been able to get
5 herself off mute. If not, we'll go and visit and
6 see if would like to share her thoughts. If
7 Judy hasn't had any luck, that is no worries, we
8 can come back to you, no problem.

9 Okay, well, Judy, we will be coming
10 back to you, so don't fret.

11 But I'll ask if -- we did hear from
12 Tom, but I want to see if there is with Tom
13 who also has input. She may or may not be with us?

14

15

16

17 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Okay, wonderful,
18 thanks so much, .

19

20 TOM: Okay, did you have a question for
21 me or --

22 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Well, why don't we
23 move forward into our second set of questions, so
24 let me start there.

25 So let me read the second question to

1 you all now. The question is, In your view, what
2 is the most important thing that the Commissioners
3 need to know as they consider recommendations?

4 And I will start again with you, Tom,
5 but I will note that, Judy, we will give you time
6 to answer both question one and two. But I'll give
7 you a moment there and I'll start here with Tom.

8 TOM: All right. Well, what I liked
9 about our place was they bought into the protocols
10 and immediately we were shut down. It was, you
11 know, a hardship for us because we were isolated,
12 but considering the alternatives, it was fine.

13 The thing I would recommend is that you
14 maybe pay those PSWs a little more money and make
15 it registered so that they are part of a -- they
16 are recognized as part of the health system, but
17 they are the backbone of this whole place.

18 And if they could mandate that you have
19 one PSW per every 'x' number of residents, it would
20 help a lot. Even for the private care ones, the
21 for-profit ones, it is going to cut into their
22 bottom line, but they are going to be safer.

23 That is about my answer.

24 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Okay, well, that
25 is --

1 TOM: Does that make sense?

2 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: That makes a lot of
3 sense to me, Tom. Thank you so much for that
4 feedback. That is really helpful. Thank you so
5 much.

6 So I am going to turn question two now
7 to Kaz. So question two again is, In your view,
8 what is the most important thing that the
9 Commissioners need to know as they consider
10 recommendations?

11 Kaz, are you ready to answer question
12 two? And I'll just note that you are on mute, if
13 you are able to unmute yourself.

14 KAZ: Okay, there. Am I unmuted?

15 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Yes, you are.

16 KAZ: Okay, can you repeat that
17 question again?

18 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Certainly. In your
19 view, what is the most important thing that the
20 Commissioners need to know as they consider
21 recommendations?

22 Go ahead, Kaz.

23 KAZ: Well, what they need to know is,
24 A, that the staff here work very hard and they
25 should be taken better care of, because a lot of

1 the times is they are the staff and they are the
2 ones that are going out into the world and coming
3 back in here, so there is a chance that they may be
4 bringing something in.

5 So they have to be vaccinated. I don't
6 know if they are all vaccinated everywhere, not
7 only here in this building, but in every long-term
8 care the staff needs to be vaccinated. Everybody
9 else needs to be vaccinated. And I think that is
10 going to be the start to regaining our freedoms
11 again.

12 Basically, that is what I feel. I have
13 nothing else to say there.

14 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Well, thank you so
15 much, Kaz. Thanks for sharing that. I super
16 appreciate your feedback. Thank you.

17 So I am going to now turn to Cindy for
18 question two. So Cindy, in your view, what is the
19 most important thing that the Commissioners need to
20 know as they consider recommendations?

21 And, Cindy, you are on mute right now,
22 if you are able to unmute yourself.

23 CINDY: Yes, I am here.

24 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Wonderful.

25 CINDY: Could I get you to repeat the

1 question again, please?

2 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Certainly. The
3 question is, In your view, what is the most
4 important thing that the Commissioners need to know
5 as they consider recommendations?

6 CINDY: Okay, I agree with the other
7 two fellows. I think that they need to increase
8 their wages and to make sure that they are all
9 vaccinated, that everyone has had their shot and
10 then that way we can all be safe in the home.

11 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Absolutely,
12 wonderful. Okay, thank you, Cindy. Is there any
13 other thoughts that you wanted to share?

14 CINDY: No, not right now.

15 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Wonderful, thank
16 you so much for your contribution.

17 CINDY: Thank you.

18 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Okay, and I see
19 that we have got Judy unmuted. Judy, I'm so sorry
20 you have had such a difficult time with the tech
21 today, but I would like to ask you now both
22 questions, if that is all right, and I'll start
23 with the first one which I'll read to you now.

24 Number one is, What impact has COVID
25 had on your life? Is there anything that could

1 have made things better for you and other
2 residents?

3 CINDY: I was so used to going out to
4 church, shopping, going to restaurants, going to
5 friends' and families' homes, and then all of a
6 sudden, bam, we are hit, I guess blind-sided, I say
7 blind-sided by this COVID-19.

8 And we used to have gatherings here at
9 Woodingford Lodge in Woodstock, and we would have
10 gatherings of up to 40 to 50 people and now we are
11 down to 5.

12 And it is so hard not to get together
13 with people, but we do it and I'm not happy about
14 that, but I guess we just go on.

15 And we had two staff members and two
16 residents who had COVID, but they have now since
17 been I guess cured and we are very happy about
18 that.

19 Two weeks before Ontario went into
20 lockdown, the management staff here at Woodingford
21 put us into lockdown two weeks before, and that was
22 such a good move. I can't say enough about our
23 Director. He is compassionate and he is caring.
24 And the staff that we have here, they go above and
25 beyond every day. And I have seen some of them

1 work overtime and work overtime and work overtime.

2 And it has affected me in that I am
3 unable to leave the premises unless I have a
4 medical appointment, and I would love to see my two
5 youngest granddaughters. They are 4 and 6, and
6 they don't understand why I can't come outside and
7 play with them and hug them and kiss them. And it
8 frustrates me to no end, and I am sorry that I cry.

9 But I just -- I worry about the young
10 age group that are having parties and they don't
11 seem - and excuse my language - they don't give a
12 damn about anybody else. They don't care about
13 their families, I don't think, and they don't care
14 about their friends.

15 And it is too bad because it is into
16 the schools now, and to me that is disgusting. It
17 is disgusting that if people can't get it through
18 their heads that they can't do this. But I have a
19 saying. I heard a saying a long time ago that you
20 can't cure stupid, and you just can't. And
21 unfortunately, that is a bad statement for me to
22 make and I apologize, but that is the way I feel.

23 And then question two, I feel that our
24 Canadian and Ontario Governments should have acted
25 sooner concerning the vaccines and alerting us

1 sooner as well.

2 And on a personal note, I feel that our
3 leaders shouldn't have dragged their heels at
4 letting this god awful disease spread, and I'm just
5 baffled at why they took another government's word
6 that everything was fine, you know, everything is
7 fine. It is not fine. We are losing people of all
8 ages now, and to me that is disgusting.

9 And you know, if they had just said,
10 okay, we are going to react to this sooner, and
11 maybe it wouldn't be this far.

12 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Well, Judy, I
13 certainly can understand your frustration, and I
14 hope you get to see your grandchildren soon. And
15 thank you so much for sharing your input to both of
16 our questions here.

17 And I just want to say thank you to all
18 of you for sharing your thoughts and opinions to
19 both of our questions that we have put forward
20 today. So thank you so much.

21 And I don't think that I have missed
22 anyone here for both of our questions. I'm sure my
23 colleagues would chime in if I did. So thank you
24 so much for your participation.

25 And I think now I'll pass it over to

1 Commissioner Coke to make some closing remarks.

2 COMMISSIONER ANGELA COKE: Thank you.

3 So to all the residents who
4 participated today, a special thank you for coming
5 forward, for sharing your stories and your variety
6 of experiences. You have provided some very
7 valuable comments, and this is information that
8 will help guide us as we finalize our
9 recommendations. So we are very grateful to you
10 for helping us with our work.

11 So again, thank you again, and all of
12 you, please have a good afternoon.

13 Thank you.

14 ANGELINE HAWTHORN: Thank you,
15 everyone.

16 COMMISSIONER ANGELA COKE: Bye-bye.

17 JUDY: Thank you so much.

18

19 -- Adjourned at 2:36 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.

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16 Dated this 1st day of April, 2021.

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23 NEESONS, A VERITEXT COMPANY

24 PER: DEANA SANTEDICOLA, RPR, CRR, CSR
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WORD INDEX

< 1 >

10th 8:24
110 9:10, 20
1st 1:15 26:16

< 2 >

2:00 1:16 4:1
2:36 25:19
20 12:11, 12
2021 1:16 26:16

< 3 >

3:00 1:16
35 9:11

< 4 >

4 23:5
40 22:10

< 5 >

5 22:11
50 22:10

< 6 >

6 23:5

< A >

Absolutely 16:21 21:11
acted 23:24
Adjourned 25:19
admit 5:10
after 7:13
afternoon 4:3, 4
6:21 8:14 25:12
age 12:1 23:10
agencies 10:25
ages 24:8
ago 16:9 23:19
agree 21:6
ahead 14:20
19:22
alerting 23:25
alternatives
18:12
amplified 11:1
Analyst 2:19, 21
3:2
Angela 2:4
5:17 6:17, 19,
23 25:2, 16
Angeline 2:19
4:21, 25 5:1, 2,

7 8:13 10:8, 15
14:16 15:12, 21
16:13, 21, 24
17:3, 17, 22
18:24 19:2, 15,
18 20:14, 24
21:2, 11, 15, 18
24:12 25:14
answered 11:6
anybody 23:12
anyways 13:20
apologize 15:12
23:22
appointed 6:24
appointment
23:4
appreciate 7:25
10:10 20:16
April 1:16
26:16
asked 7:17
11:7
asking 11:5
associations
7:20
attending 1:15
awful 24:4
awhile 12:4

< B >

back 8:2 10:13
13:4 14:17, 23
15:10 17:8, 10
20:3
backbone 18:17
backyard 12:11
bad 12:8 14:2
23:15, 21
badly 10:1
baffled 24:5
Bahal 3:2
ball 10:6
bam 22:6
bang-up 9:15
basic 9:21
basically 11:23
20:12
behalf 4:13
5:13, 21
best 6:10 9:22
better 6:10
11:10, 21 15:4,
24 16:15 19:25
22:1

Bianchi 2:17
4:3, 21 5:1, 6, 9,
12 8:9, 16, 18
10:14, 18 11:15,
19 12:13, 21, 25
13:16, 19 14:5,
12, 14
Bianchini 2:21
bit 7:14
blew 9:7
blind-sided
22:6, 7
bottom 18:22
bought 18:9
bringing 20:4
building 20:7
burning 13:13
bye 14:13
bye-bye 14:14
25:16

< C >

call 6:14 15:14
Canadian 23:24
captured 10:16
CARE 1:7 2:9,
17, 20, 22, 24, 25
3:3 4:11 5:15
7:5 8:5 9:21
14:9 18:20
19:25 20:8
23:12, 13
careful 12:7
caring 22:23
carry 5:25
carrying 7:15
cataract 8:23
caused 16:3
certainly 6:8
9:12 19:18
21:2 24:13
CERTIFICATE
26:1
Certified 26:4
certify 26:4
Chair 2:3 6:25
chance 20:3
check 17:3
chime 24:23
church 22:4
Cindy 2:12
5:14 15:2, 5, 7,
16, 17, 18, 20, 25
16:14, 17, 22, 25
17:2 20:17, 18,

21, 23, 25 21:6,
12, 14, 17 22:3
Cindy's 5:13
closing 25:1
Coke 2:4 4:4
5:17 6:17, 19,
23 8:10 25:1, 2,
16
colleagues 4:23
6:4 24:23
come 13:4, 12,
14 14:17 17:8
23:6
coming 5:3
12:19 17:9
20:2 25:4
commencing
4:1
comments 10:7,
10 25:7

COMMISSION

1:7 2:3, 18, 20,
22, 24 3:1, 3
4:12, 22 5:15
6:25 7:1, 4
Commissioner
2:4 4:4, 5 5:17
6:17, 19 8:9
25:1, 2, 16
Commissioners
4:17, 24 5:16,
24 6:6, 23 18:2
19:9, 20 20:19
21:4

Commissions

7:7, 12
COMPANY
26:22
compared 9:1
compassionate
22:23
concerning
23:25
confined 14:2
connection 6:11
consider 18:3
19:9, 20 20:20
21:5
considering
9:16 18:12
continue 4:19
15:1
contribution
21:16

corner 12:19
correct 26:12
Counsel 2:17
count 9:6
couple 4:8 5:12
course 13:19
COVID 7:19
9:24 15:3, 22
16:8 21:24
22:16
COVID-19 1:7
4:11 7:5 8:6
11:9, 19 22:7
credit 16:11
critical 7:23
CRR 26:3, 23
cry 23:8
CSR 26:4, 23
cure 23:20
cured 22:17
cut 18:21

< D >

damn 23:12
Dated 26:16
Dawn 2:23
day 1:15 22:25
26:16
Deana 3:7 26:3,
23
Derek 2:25
devastating 7:21
died 8:5
different 7:14
difficult 21:20
directing 15:15
directly 7:24
Director 2:23,
25 22:23
Discussion 5:10
disease 24:4
disgusting
23:16, 17 24:8
dismay 9:6
doing 6:10
9:15, 21
dragged 24:3
dropped 14:24
15:14
dying 12:1

< E >

earth 13:14
earthlings 13:9,

<p>13, 14 easier 6:8 emulate 6:11 ensure 7:10 especially 12:19 established 7:13 events 7:8 everybody 12:24 13:6 14:1 16:6 20:8 excellent 9:14 excited 13:2 excuse 23:11 expecting 13:22 experiences 4:16 5:23 25:6 Extendicare 16:1 eye 8:24 9:1</p> <p>< F > facilitators 8:3 families 7:6, 22 11:2 22:5 23:13 family 6:2 7:18, 20 fantastic 16:12 feedback 19:4 20:16 feel 6:11 20:12 23:22, 23 24:2 fellows 21:7 felt 9:14 final 4:13 finalize 25:8 find 9:9 fine 8:17 18:12 24:6, 7 finished 10:15 Floyd 13:12 followed 10:25 foregoing 26:5, 11 forgot 10:20 format 6:8 for-profit 18:21 forth 26:7 forward 4:15 14:9 17:23 24:19 25:5 found 4:17 5:24 Frank 2:3 5:17 7:1 freedoms 20:10 fret 17:10</p>	<p>friends 22:5 23:14 frustrates 23:8 frustration 24:13</p> <p>< G > gang 10:3 gatherings 22:8, 10 give 4:10 14:18, 21 16:11 18:5, 6 23:11 glad 4:9 12:18 God 12:2 13:24 24:4 Good 4:3, 4 6:21 8:14, 18 9:19 14:6, 7, 8 22:22 25:12 goodness 8:21 9:8 Government 6:24 Governments 7:7 23:24 government's 24:5 grandchildren 24:14 granddaughters 23:5 grateful 25:9 great 4:17 10:2, 9 11:15 14:6, 14 ground 4:18, 19 group 23:10 guess 6:13 22:6, 14, 17 guide 25:8</p> <p>< H > half 9:5 hand 14:21 handled 13:21 16:18 happen 7:11 13:3 happened 7:9 9:2 happening 12:3 13:24 happy 22:13, 17 hard 19:24 22:12 hardship 18:11</p>	<p>Hawthorn 2:19 4:25 5:2, 7 10:8, 15 14:16 15:12, 21 16:13, 21, 24 17:3, 17, 22 18:24 19:2, 15, 18 20:14, 24 21:2, 11, 15, 18 24:12 25:14 heads 23:18 health 18:16 hear 4:18 6:1 7:24 8:15 14:6 16:14 17:11 heard 5:22 7:19 9:24 23:19 hearing 4:16 10:16 14:7 heels 24:3 Held 1:14 help 18:20 25:8 helpful 10:23 14:17 16:25 19:4 helping 25:10 Hi 5:14 8:14, 15 10:14 11:4 15:18 hit 16:2 22:6 home 8:21 9:5, 7 11:11, 22 12:9, 21 13:13 21:10 homes 7:5 8:5 10:24 12:1 13:25 22:5 honey 16:22 Honourable 2:3 hope 24:14 hopefully 14:21 house 12:10 hug 23:7 hurting 13:7, 8</p> <p>< I > Ida 2:17 4:3, 21, 25 5:1, 6, 9, 12, 14 6:20 8:9, 16, 18 10:11, 13, 14, 18 11:15, 19 12:13, 21, 25 13:16, 19 14:5, 12, 14, 23 15:13 immediately 18:10</p>	<p>impact 7:21 11:8, 19 15:2, 22 21:24 impacted 7:6, 19 importance 7:24 important 5:24 18:2 19:8, 19 20:19 21:4 including 7:5 increase 21:7 independent 7:3 information 5:25 25:7 input 10:17 17:13 24:15 Inquiries 7:8, 12 inside 10:24 16:4 internet 15:14 investigate 7:4, 9, 17 investigation 5:25 isolated 18:11 issues 7:16 15:14</p> <p>< J > Jack 7:1 Jay 3:2 job 9:15 join 8:3 joined 4:7 6:25 Judy 2:10 4:8 14:15, 16 17:4, 7, 9 18:5 21:19 24:12 25:17</p> <p>< K > Kaz 2:11 4:7 11:4, 5, 12, 14, 17, 23 12:14, 22, 23 13:2, 17, 20 14:11, 12, 13 15:9 19:7, 11, 14, 16, 22, 23 20:15 key 7:16 kind 6:7 13:2 14:3 kiss 23:7 Kitts 7:1</p> <p>< L > language 23:11</p>	<p>lawyers 4:22 5:15 Lead 3:2 6:24 leaders 24:3 learn 14:10 leave 23:3 left 9:9 Legal 2:17 Lett 2:25 letting 24:4 life 11:9, 20 15:3, 23 21:25 liked 18:8 listen 4:23 listening 6:6 live 9:4 lived 9:4 lives 16:20 living 6:1 12:9 lockdown 8:25 10:3 22:20, 21 Lodge 8:20 22:9 long 16:8 23:19 LONG-TERM 1:7 2:9, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25 3:3 4:11 5:15 7:5 8:5 14:9 20:7 looking 4:15 11:24 losing 24:7 lost 10:11 lot 18:20 19:2, 25 love 23:4 loved 16:3 luck 17:7 lucky 13:25 14:1</p> <p>< M > made 11:10, 21 15:4, 23 16:15 22:1 26:8 managed 10:4 management 22:20 mandate 18:18 Manor 9:5, 9, 25 Maple 9:5, 9, 25 March 8:24 Marrocco 2:3 4:5 5:18 7:1 medical 23:4</p>
--	--	--	--	---

MEETING 1:7
6:5, 18, 22 8:1
members 6:2
7:18 22:15
mentioned 7:16
mind 13:10
16:18
minor 9:1
minutes 9:23
missed 24:21
moment 8:4, 7
14:17 18:7
momentarily
10:12
money 18:14
move 14:9
17:23 22:22
mute 8:12
11:12 15:7, 16
17:5 19:12
20:21

< N >
necessary 12:17
needs 20:8, 9
NEESONS 26:22
new 5:11
news 10:25
11:25 13:1, 23
14:8
normal 13:4
15:11
note 18:5
19:12 24:2
notes 26:12
not-for-profit
8:21
noticed 11:24
number 4:23
5:22 6:4 18:19
21:24
nursing 8:21
9:5, 7

< O >
observed 8:7
observing 8:4
occur 7:8
occurred 7:13
old 12:1
ones 16:3
18:20, 21 20:2
ongoing 7:15
Ontario 8:20

22:19 23:24
Ontario's 4:11
open 6:18
opening 5:4
Operations 2:23
opinions 24:18
outside 23:6
overtime 23:1

< P >
p.m 1:16 4:1
25:19
Palin 2:23
pandemic 4:16,
19 5:23 7:15
8:22 16:2
part 12:16
18:15, 16
participant 5:11
participants
1:15 2:15
participated
25:4
participating
6:22
participation
8:1 24:24
parties 23:10
pass 10:6
24:25
pause 5:2
pay 9:17 18:14
people 4:9
5:22 6:1 9:3,
21 11:25 13:4
14:9 22:10, 13
23:17 24:7
people's 9:16
person 6:9 9:23
personal 24:2
person's 9:17
physical 9:18
picked 11:1
place 18:9, 17
26:6
play 23:7
Policy 2:19, 21,
25 3:2
practices 14:8
premises 16:4
23:3
PRESENT 3:6
PRESENTERS
2:7

private 18:20
problem 17:8
proceedings
26:5
propose 6:13
protocols 10:3
18:9
provided 25:6
PSW 18:19
PSWs 18:14
public 10:23
purpose 7:9
put 12:6 13:18
22:21 24:19
putting 10:21

< Q >
quarantined
12:9, 10, 15
question 11:6, 7,
8, 17 14:19
15:6, 9, 15, 19,
22 17:20, 25
18:1, 6 19:6, 7,
11, 17 20:18
21:1, 3 23:23
questions 6:15
17:23 21:22
24:16, 19, 22
quite 16:18

< R >
races 13:10
react 24:10
read 17:25
21:23
ready 15:5
19:11
realized 10:19
12:5
really 4:9 5:24
11:6 16:17, 25
19:4
recognized
18:16
recommend
18:13
recommendation
s 7:10 18:3
19:10, 21 20:20
21:5 25:9
reconnect 10:20
record 5:10
recorded 26:9

regaining 20:10
registered 18:15
regrets 7:2
remarks 5:4
6:18 25:1 26:8
remind 10:20
remotely 1:15
repeat 5:4, 12
15:19 19:16
20:25
Reporter 26:4
REPORTER'S
26:1
representative
7:21
resident 5:3, 20
7:20 8:19
14:19 15:2
RESIDENTS 2:9
4:6, 13 5:19, 22
7:6, 18, 22, 25
8:4 9:10, 11, 12
11:2, 11, 21
15:5, 24 18:19
22:2, 16 25:3
restaurants 22:4
Rokosh 2:23
room 6:14
12:12 14:3, 24
Rose 2:21
roundtable 6:7
RPR 26:3, 23
run 11:24 14:9

< S >
safe 21:10
safer 18:22
Santedicola 3:7
26:3, 23
save 13:14
scheduled 8:23
schools 23:16
screen 15:10
Secretariat 2:18,
20, 22, 24 3:1, 3
sends 7:2
Senior 2:17, 19,
21 3:2
sense 19:1, 3
senses 5:21
session 4:14
5:11, 20 10:21
set 7:4, 7
17:23 26:6
settled 5:8

share 17:6
21:13
sharing 17:1
20:15 24:15, 18
25:5
shopping 22:4
Shorthand 26:4,
12
shot 21:9
shout 16:11
shuddering 9:25
shut 18:10
sick 12:1
silence 8:4, 7
sitting 4:23
small 14:3
soon 9:24
24:14
sooner 23:25
24:1, 10
Sorry 5:1 9:14
21:19 23:8
special 25:4
spread 7:4, 19,
22 9:13 24:4
staff 6:3 7:6,
18, 23 8:5 9:13
11:2 12:5, 23
16:5, 6, 7, 12
19:24 20:1, 8
22:15, 20, 24
start 8:11, 23
10:5 11:5
17:24 18:4, 7
20:10 21:22
started 9:25
statement 23:21
stay 16:4
Stenographer/Tra
nscriptionist 3:7
stenographically
26:9
stick 13:9
stop 11:25
stories 4:24
14:6, 7, 8 25:5
stretch 9:20, 22
stuck 12:11
stuff 12:2, 11
13:10, 11
stupid 23:20
success 14:6
sudden 15:10
22:6

<p>super 10:9 20:15 supporting 6:5 surgery 8:24 surprised 13:22 system 18:16</p> <p>< T > taught 12:7 Team 3:2 tech 21:20 terrible 16:2 thanks 4:6 8:9 10:18 11:3 14:12, 14 16:25 17:18 20:15 therapy 9:18 thing 9:9 12:8 13:23 14:2 18:2, 13 19:8, 19 20:19 21:4 things 5:13 9:2 11:10, 21 12:7 13:4 15:4, 24 16:15 22:1 thinking 9:25 thinly 9:13 thought 12:4 thoughts 4:11 17:6 21:13 24:18 Tillsonburg 8:20 9:6, 11 time 9:17 14:18 16:8 18:5 21:20 23:19 26:6, 8 times 20:1 today 4:9 5:16 8:1 10:5 21:21 24:20 25:4 Tom 2:13 4:7 8:11, 14, 15, 17, 19 10:9, 16 11:3, 6 17:12, 20 18:4, 7, 8 19:1, 3 tragedy 7:13 tragic 7:8 transcribed 26:10 transcribing 10:21 transcript 10:17,</p>	<p>22 26:12 triple 9:11, 13 true 26:11 trying 6:7 10:19 turn 6:17 8:2 10:1 11:4 19:6 20:17 TV 13:11</p> <p>< U > unable 23:3 understand 10:23 12:17 23:6 24:13 understandable 14:4 unfolds 4:20 unfortunately 23:21 union 7:20 unmute 11:13 14:21 15:8, 17 19:13 20:22 unmuted 19:14 21:19</p> <p>< V > vaccinated 12:22 13:5, 6 20:5, 6, 8, 9 21:9 vaccines 12:20 23:25 valuable 25:7 value 4:17 variety 25:5 VERITEXT 26:22 Videoconferenci ng 1:14 view 18:1 19:7, 19 20:18 21:3 virtual 6:7, 14 visit 17:5 voices 11:1</p> <p>< W > wages 21:8 wait 16:18 waiting 4:8 wanted 21:13 watched 8:22 9:6 ways 6:8 website 10:22 weeks 22:19, 21</p>	<p>wonderful 12:25 15:21 16:14 17:17 20:24 21:12, 15 Woodingford 8:20 22:9, 20 Woodstock 22:9 word 4:12 5:21 24:5 work 7:15 9:16 19:24 23:1 25:10 workers 9:15, 19 world 20:2 worries 10:16 17:7 worry 23:9 Wow 12:25</p> <p>< Y > Yeah 12:13, 24 13:16 year 9:4 years 16:2 York 16:1 young 23:9 youngest 23:5</p> <p>< Z > Zoom 1:14</p>	
--	---	--	--