

forcefully fed to the point of choking.

“In some homes, the staffing collapsed,” said Long-Term Care Minister Merrilee Fullerton, who added the province is considering whether to allow “designated” family care givers into all homes to assist their loved ones.

She defended the length of time it took the province to issue a takeover order for Woodbridge Vista Care, which was placed under control of William Osler hospital last Thursday.

A takeover is “a whole process in collaboration with the home,” she told reporters, acknowledging the death was a “tragic case” and an investigation into negligence at the home has begun.

Horwath has repeatedly called for the province to issue takeover orders for all nursing homes in crisis to save lives to give families piece of mind and residents a better shot at survival.

“In this broken system, their parent or grandparent may also being going without the hands-on care they need to protect their health,” Horwath added.

Fullerton said the number of high-risk homes in “code red” status is down to 10, a drop from 19 at the start of June. She has refused to release a list of them.

Visits to eligible homes that are not in outbreak — still a problem for 65 of Ontario's 626 nursing homes — must be scheduled in advance, Fullerton added.

In long-term care, at least one visitor will be allowed weekly but visits must take place outdoors where it is more difficult for the virus to spread.

In retirement homes, visits can be indoors or outdoors in resident's rooms or designated areas. The number of visitors is at the discretion of the home.

At group homes and shelters, two people can visit a resident at any one time.

Fullerton said the province is in talks with the federal government to keep military medical teams in the first five nursing homes they assisted beyond Friday's deadline for departure.

Rob Ferguson is a Toronto-based reporter covering Ontario politics for the Star. Follow him on Twitter: [@robferguson1](https://twitter.com/robferguson1)