Family Councils Ontario

FALL 2021

MINISTRY OF LONG TERM CARE

PRE LEGISLATIVE SUBMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

As an active sector stakeholder, Family Councils Ontario was approached by the Ministry of Long-Term Care to share insights in a Pre-Legislative Consultation. Our organization is dedicated to recognizing the dynamic and multifaceted individual experiences of long-term care residents, families, and long-term care home staff across the province. We believe it is necessary for equity to be embedded as a foundational principle into new and existing frameworks and legislation. In reflection of sector trends and Family Council & family caregiver commentary, this document outlines the recommendations that were submitted by Family Councils Ontario to improve staffing, accountability & enforcement, diversity and capacity in long-term care.

Creating safe, vibrant, inclusive and dignified spaces in the long-term care system is key to meet the diverse needs and acuity of residents. Family Councils Ontario strives to lead and support families of residents in improving the quality of life in long-term care across Ontario. To enable families to cultivate effective and informed Family Councils, we encourage participation in policy making and system planning.

We wholeheartedly believe essential caregivers, residents, and long-term care staff should be engaged in the policy implementation and reform process in order to enact positive change. Through working with partners at government and system levels, we've had numerous opportunities to bring forth family caregiver perspective on issues ranging from staffing disparities, to home redevelopment to person-centered health and language interventions. Every matter facing the long-term care system can benefit from the family perspective. Our organization continues to be seen as a strong pillar for family engagement in care and decision making as well as a conduit for channeling that information to decisions makers. We are honoured to play that role within the sector and will continue to update our service users on our projects and initiatives.

We want to recognize the Ontario Government and Ministry of Long-Term Care's recent extraordinary investments in the sector, including enhanced training for staff and funding for four hours of care for residents. We also acknowledge recent consultation efforts to gain better knowledge on the experiences of those living, working and caregiving in long-term care. Given the devastating impacts of COVID-19, it is imperative for the sector to address existing gaps and use proactive methodology to predict future issues that may arise.

BACKGROUNDER

Family Councils Ontario works with Long-Term care home residents' families, Family Councils, and home staff across Ontario to enable them to cultivate positive relationships, build effective Family Councils, and enhance long-term care communities. Our mission is to lead and support families in improving quality of life in long-term care. Through working with essential family caregivers, long-term care home staff, and sector partners, we strive to create safe, vibrant, inclusive, and equitable spaces in the long-term care system

Our organization is dedicated to sharing the interests of Family Councils at a broader level through involvement in initiatives at the system level of long-term care. We continually seek opportunities to inform policy to improve the quality of life in long-term care and foster partnerships and relationships to increase impact. Our team has had opportunities to communicate with the Ministry of Long-Term Care on various occasions to impart the importance of incorporating the family experience into directives and legislation.

RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic exposed gaps within the Long-Term Care sector, Family Councils Ontario has had the opportunity to gather feedback from individuals directly connected to the sector. Through a variety of methods including consultations, surveys, research spotlights, networking events and participation on provincial advisory tables, our team has been provided with meaningful insights to further inform our work, partnerships and strategic priorities. Most importantly, our recommendations take into consideration the accounts of family caregivers and Family Councils who trust our team to echo their experiences to our sector partners and Ministry contacts. We pride ourselves on representing all of the families who work endlessly to enhance LTC communities for residents across Ontario.

Our recommendations to the MLTC focus on transformative culture change for the sector and the use of quantitative and qualitative data to reframe legislation, policy, funding frameworks, staffing and performance indicators.

STAFFING

To increase staffing and improve quality of care in long-term care, Family Councils Ontario recommended the government consider the following:

TRANSFORMATIVE & MODERNIZED CULTURE CHANGE	Using evidence based (quantitative and qualitative from professional and lived experience experts) strategic advice and the experiences of long-term care residents, families, operators, sector advocates and more to implement a diversified person-centered approach to care delivery.
COMMITMENT TO FUNDING INVESTMENT	Placing funds in dedicated staffing envelopes. Ensuring the creation of positions and supports for PSWs, RPNs and RNs are prioritized and fulfilled to implement the four hours of direct care promise outlined in Ontario's 2020 Budget.
FOCUS ON CHANGING NEEDS	Using information from LTC studies and consultations to respond to rising resident acuity and anticipate the needs of those currently on LTC waitlists.
COMPENSATION CONTINUITY	Addressing the compensation, access to benefits and full-time/part-time employment variances across the long-term care, hospital and community care sectors to incentivize careers in LTC.
REGULATED GUIDELINES FOR STAFF RATIOS, PROPORTIONS & SKILLSETS	Re-development of staffing requirements and changes to the LTCHA to include parameters around the proportion of staff and number of hours of direct care based on resident needs. Integration of requirements for allied health professionals with varied skillsets to further support staff and meet resident needs into LTCHA (including but not limited to Social Workers, Social Service Workers, Dieticians, Physiotherapists and Health Care Aides). Encouraging the hiring of non-traditional staff to alleviate workload of PSWs and Nurses. Increased support for residents, family, and staff wellbeing though the requirement of each home to have on staff a Social Worker or similar professional who can provide psychosocial support.

PROACTIVE SECTOR RECRUITMENT	Sharing information on LTC sector careers through partnerships with secondary and post-secondary institutions. Providing new graduates with supports for hands-on training and hiring placements. Analyzing trends in the labour pool to identify projected gaps and opportunities for recruitment.
COMMITMENT TO TRAINING, LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS & CONTINUING EDUCATION	High standard practical and theoretical training for those entering and currently in the LTC workforce. Providing dedicated staff with opportunities for professional development, preceptorship and promotion. Recognizing and rewarding the contributions of tenured team members.
ENHANCED IPAC MEASURES FOR HOMES OF ALL SIZES	Ongoing training and updating of IPAC procedures to ensure new and current staff are adequately equipped to enhance care and reduce outbreaks regardless of home size and staffing ratios.
ENHANCE HR SUPPORT & CONFLICT INTERVENTIONS	Provide alternative dispute resolution methods to address interpersonal and technical conflicts between staff and others in the work environment including but not limited to residents, families and coworkers.
PROTECTION FOR STAFF FROM PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL RISK	Ensuring staff are provided with the proper equipment, training and supports to reduce the frequency of physical injuries in the workplace. Access to psychological safety resources to reduce absenteeism and staff burn out.

PERFORMANCE **INDICATORS**

To strengthen the long-term care system as a whole and impactfully measure improvement, Family Councils Ontario recommended the government consider using the following qualitative and quantitative performance indicators:

STANDARDIZED PRACTICES FOR MEASURING RESIDENT QUALITY OF LIFE	Creation of standardized approach to conducting resident and family satisfaction surveys and collection of data to compare results and identify areas of improvement.
REDUCED SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AMONGST RESIDENTS	Measuring symptoms of depression including but not limited to sadness, anxiety, insomnia and tearfulness.
DEPRESCRIBING & MEDICATION MANAGEMENT	Reduction in medication distribution amongst residents in LTC and decrease in the reporting of side effects and adverse drug events.
DECREASE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATION	Reduction in the amount of antipsychotic medication given to residents.
CONSISTENT RESIDENT PAIN & INJURY MONITORING	Reduction of resident pain and injuries including but not limited to falls, strains, ulcers and UTIs. Monitoring of trends related to common injuries and implementation of proactive procedures and safety mechanisms to reduce injuries.
CONSULTATION WITH FAMILY CAREGIVERS & FAMILY COUNCIL MEMBERS	Connecting with Family Caregivers and members of Family Councils to collect qualitative data on quality of care across homes.
ONGOING PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON LTC STANDARDS	Engaging with residents, families, clinicians, health service provides and LTC stakeholders to identify the changing needs and gaps in the sector.

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MEASURING STAFF SATISFACTION	Including staff satisfaction as a metric of reporting and gathering insights on workplace culture, staff wellbeing and human resources support.
REAL TIME RETENTION REPORTING	Gathering, analyzing, and reporting real time data on staff retention, absenteeism and turnover.

ACCOUNTABILITY & ENFORCEMENT

Making Accountability and transparency a priority within the long-term care sector is integral to changing the public perception of the system and restoring trust in the province's ability to provide those living, working and caregiving in long-term care with the supports and resources they require. Addressing the gaps highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic is fundamental to transforming the system

Family Councils Ontario recommended the government consider the following to improve accountability and strengthen enforcement:

MODERNIZING INTERVIEW PRACTICES FOR INSPECTIONS	Using a modern hybrid of methods and practices to collect information from residents, families and staff (in person interviews, electronic questionnaires, etc.).

ENHANCED LTC HOME INSPECTION FOLLOW UP	Ensuring reports of founded non-compliance are addressed and resolved in a timely manner.
INSPECTION BACKLOG	Increasing the number of certified Inspectors to ensure all homes are inspected at least once per year.
NONCOMPLIANCE PENALTIES	Harsher penalties for LTC homes and licensees who do not meet inspection protocols, compliance or address previous reports of non-compliance.
ENHANCE HR SUPPORT & CONFLICT INTERVENTIONS	Provide alternative dispute resolution methods to address interpersonal and technical conflicts between staff and others in the work environment including but not limited to residents, families and coworkers.
USER FRIENDLY PUBLIC REPORTING SYSTEM	Improving access to LTC home profiles, inspection report documents and orders.
CAREGIVER & POA ACCESS TO RESIDENT INFORMATION	Improving access to resident charts and care plans and providing timely updates on resident overall health to caregivers and POAs.
CREATE A CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT THOUGH COACHING NOT PUNISHMENT	Improving access to resident charts and care plans and providing timely updates on resident overall health to caregivers and POAs.

DIVERSITY

Recognition of the unique experiences of Ontario's long-term care residents, family and staff population is key to enhancing the delivery of culturally specific services. Embedding equity as a foundational principle will aid in distinguishing diversity in all its forms including gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion and more.

Family Councils Ontario recommended the government to consider the following recommendations to enhance access and appropriateness of culturally specific long-term care:

INCREASING CULTURALLY SPECIFIC LTC HOME OPTIONS ACROSS THE PROVINCE	Creation of more culturally specific LTC homes to meet the changing demographics and demands of a diverse aging population and reduce lengthy wait times.
INCORPORATE CULTURAL COMPETENCY INTO NON-CULTURALLY SPECIFIC LONG-TERM CARE	Introducing programming that will aid in training staff on providing quality care to residents from various cultural backgrounds.
DIVERSE BOARDS & COMMUNITY INTEGRATION	Ensuring Boards that run culturally specific homes are representative of the community for whom they provide care.
INCREASED RESEARCH ON HEALTH OUTCOMES	Investing funding and time into researching the differential health outcomes for residents who are part of culturally specific long-term care communities to further inform the sector.
DIVERSIFIED LABOUR POOL	Identifying language gaps in LTC and encouraging individuals from various cultural backgrounds (including those who can communicate in uncommon regional specific dialects) to explore careers in LTC.

BED CAPACITY & AVAILABILITY

Choosing a long-term care home is a major decision and Ontarians should feel confident in the availability of long-term care spaces for themselves or their loved ones.

Family Councils Ontario requested the government to consider the following recommendations to eliminate existing barriers to long-term care home and bed development:

ACKNOWLEDGING REGIONAL DIFFERENCES	Using a transformative approach versus a one size fits all approach to address the barriers that impact homes of different sizes including land development, funding subsidies, design standards and unique capacity issues.
GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO MODERN DESIGN	Eliminate 3-4-person ward rooms in the design of new LTC homes and renovation of existing homes.
SHORT STAY PROGRAMS	Assessing and responding to regional needs for short stay beds and demand for respite care and supportive care programs via LTC reporting.
·INCREASING FUNDING FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCES & COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH VARIOUS ABILITIES	Addressing the rising population of young adults (ages 18-64) with complex diagnoses currently living in long-term care and creating more community resources and housing supports.