

May 29, 2020

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Long-Term Care (LTC)
Via email: merrilee.fullerton@pc.ola.org, Merrilee.fullerton@ontario.ca

Dear Minister:

Therapeutic Recreation Ontario supports the provincial government's announcement to establish an independent commission into Ontario's long-term care system. The time is past due for the system to be scrutinized by a non-partisan, independent body to ensure the safety of all residents today and into the future.

The scope of the commission must encompass the psycho-social well-being as well as the physical safety of all residents. **That is why Therapeutic Recreation Ontario is requesting the opportunity to address the Commission about our concerns and recommendations.**

Qualified Therapeutic Recreation (TR) professionals are trained to understand the mental, physical, psychological, spiritual, and social domains of residents. They support quality of life outcomes through therapeutic interventions based on individual assessments and treatments which includes developing meaningful and authentic programs.

Therapeutic Recreation professionals play a key role in the health and well-being of LTC residents

During this pandemic, TRs continue to support residents as they are increasingly feeling anxious, isolated, depressed, lonely, and bored. Therapeutic Recreation Ontario has collaborated with our members to create resources for long-term care homes to mitigate these situations and to support all LTC staff as they navigate their way to being safe together. We would be happy to share these resources with you.

A new day is dawning in long-term care and we are energized to re-imagine a new way of serving long-term care residents. The population in long-term care today is more diverse than ever before, many of whom present complex medical, physical, mental health, and/or cognitive challenges. While we need to redevelop many beds in the province, the designs of new and existing builds must also reflect a culture change, moving away from a medical focused, task-driven model of care to one that is more socially-focused, home-like, and person-centred. The current regulations and legislation are restrictive, outdated, and no longer reflective of the needs of the complex elderly population that now live in long-term care.

Although all aspects of the legislation need to be reviewed, **we are specifically speaking to the roles and qualifications of recreation staff in the regulation for "Recreation and Social Activities"**. Developing meaningful programming in long-term care requires skilled staff who have relevant education and who have

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developed the necessary competencies. Today's complex population requires more individualized, specialized care and service – large groups and special events fill the social needs of only a very few who live in long-term care now.

This is especially relevant to the 64% of residents who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or dementia ([This is Long Term Care2018, OLTCA](#)). Researchⁱ demonstrates the benefits of Therapeutic Recreation when delivered by trained professionals. They assess each individual and develop a care plan that supports the resident's strengths and needs, including modifications and adaptations to provide success for the resident. By offering meaningful experiences, Therapeutic Recreation reduces boredom, loneliness, and depression. Therapeutic Recreation also supports the reduction of personal expressions through the provision of non-pharmacological interventions that have positive results without negative side effects

Therapeutic Recreation professionals as leaders of change

A new social intercourse is beginning to reveal itself, but there are many questions. What will it look like? What is the guidance going forward? How will we communicate that to residents, families, staff, and service providers and, more importantly, how will we ensure that they understand and practice the new guidance? **TRs have the skills to adapt programs and activities to safely engage with residents, with families, with service providers, and with the community. They also have the skills to teach those skills to others.**

Therapeutic Recreation Ontario is committed to moving forward the government's agenda of improving the long-term care system and better protecting residents by bringing expertise grounded by evidence-based research to the Commission.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Sue Verrilli, R/TRO
President



Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, CAE
Executive Director

cc: Premier Doug Ford, premier@ontario.ca; doug.ford@ontario.ca
Mason Saunders, Director of Stakeholder Relations, mason.saunders@ontario.ca

About TRO:

Established in 1999, Therapeutic Recreation Ontario (TRO) is the only professional association that represents Therapeutic Recreation practitioners in the province. Our membership of more than 1800 includes practitioners, educators, and students. Our mission is to lead the TR profession through growth, advocacy, and innovation. We do this by offering quality membership services including professional development, information, networking, advocacy, and evidence-based research and best practices. We set the standard for excellence in the profession through our registration designations (R/TRO and R/TRO DIP).

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- increased positive affect (Kolanowski, Buettner, Costa, & Litaker, 2001)
 - improvements in functional capacity (Hsu et al., 2010)
 - increased sense of self and self-worth (Pedlar, Dupuis, & Gilbert, 1996)
 - decreased responsive behaviours (Buettner & Fitzsimmons, 2002; Kolanowski, Fick, & Buettner, 2009; Livingston et al., 2005; Richeson, 2012; Sellers, 2005)
 - positive adjustment to a long-term care home (Kydd, 2001)
 - decreased loneliness, boredom, and depression (Buettner & Fitzsimmons, 2002)
 - increased social engagement, “enlivened relationships”, and sense of belonging (Bernstein, Friedmann & Malaspina, 2015; Crispi & Heitner, 2002; Richeson, 2012; Sellers, 2005; Sullivan, Pedlar, & Piller, 2002)
 - increased life satisfaction, quality of life, and ageing well (Chung, 2004; Dupuis, 2008; Lloyd & Auld, 2002; Marshall & Hutchinson, 2001; Voelkl, Galecki, & Fries, 1996; Yuen et al., 2008)
 - improved family visits and increased family involvement ((Buettner, 1999; Dupuis & Pedlar, 1995; Fink & Bedall-Fink, 1986)
 - development and support of relational citizenship (Dupuis et al., 2016; Kontos, Miller, & Kontos, 2017).