

April 27, 2020

Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Via email: premier@ontario.ca; doug.ford@ontario.ca

Dear Premier:

Re: Time to recognize Therapeutic Recreation professionals in LTC

On behalf of the 1800+ members of Therapeutic Recreation Ontario, I am writing in regard to your announcement over the weekend about [Pandemic Pay Provides Support for Frontline Workers Fighting COVID-19](#). While it is certainly time for all these workers to be recognized for their dedication and commitment to Ontario's most vulnerable population, it is extremely disappointing that there is no recognition of Therapeutic Recreation professionals in Long-Term Care (LTC). Does their exclusion from the list mean that they are not eligible for pandemic pay? They are neither auxiliary nor attendant workers.

Therapeutic Recreation professionals (often referred to in LTC as Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, Recreation Therapist, Recreationist, Activation, or Recreation Assistant) are the ones who are bringing joy, meaning, and quality of life to LTC residents. People think it is about bingo, birthday parties and bible study – this is just not true! In the current COVID-19 environment, it is about ensuring connections between residents and their families, bringing comfort, calm and reassurance to the most vulnerable. They are the ones who are doing one-on-one visits with residents and where possible, organizing small group programs. They are the staff who are helping residents cope with the loneliness, depression, boredom, and isolation while their loved ones are unable to visit. They are the ones who are coordinating safe window visits. They are the ones who are helping to manage the percolating personal expressions due to the extended restrictions. They are also being asked to do jobs outside their scope of practice such as feeding and screening.

Like their LTC colleagues, they show up to work every day – at care homes that are the epicentres of COVID-19 outbreaks – because they care about and feel a responsibility towards the residents. They know that residents are scared, lonely, and missing their loved ones, and they know the difference that a friendly, familiar voice can bring to a person's day. It is about making residents feel respected and valued in the turmoil.

Mr. Premier, I am sure the lack of recognition is simply an oversight, but unfortunately, this misstep is another blow to the morale of the recreation staff – the staff who are responsible for uplifting the spirits of LTC residents.

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We don't negate the necessity of having nursing, attendant, food service, and cleaning staff in LTC, but we implore the provincial government to not underestimate or overlook the value and contributions of Therapeutic Recreation staff in the lives of this province's most vulnerable citizens.

On behalf of Therapeutic Recreation professionals across this province, we ask you to publicly acknowledge and recognize the difference they are making in the quality of life of Ontario residents AND ensure that they receive the pandemic pay.

Sincerely,



Sue Verrilli, R/TRO
President



Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, CAE
Executive Director

Copy to:

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About TRO:

Established in 1999, Therapeutic Recreation Ontario (TRO) is the 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).