

**Remarks for Ministry of Finance  
2018 Pre-Budget Consultations  
January 16, 2019  
Time Limit: 3 minutes**

**Royal Canadian Legion  
Pickering Banquet Hall, 1555 Bayly St, Pickering**

- Good morning. My name is Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, Executive Director of Therapeutic Recreation Ontario. On behalf of our 1700 members, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in Ontario's pre-budget consultations.
- Therapeutic recreation (TR), when delivered by qualified Recreation Therapists, enables individuals to achieve quality of life and optimal well-being through meaningful participation in recreation and leisure across a variety of settings such as hospitals, long-term care and retirement homes, mental health and addiction programs, rehabilitation centres, and disability programs.
- Examples of some employers includes: Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Ontario Shores, One Kid's Place in North Bay, and Alzheimer Societies around the province.
- I will first speak to how government can improve the delivery of programs and services and reduce costs. Therapeutic Recreation is an often under-utilized and under-funded resource in Long-Term Care. It is often perceived as a frill, but there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate

that recreation and leisure are necessary to a person's quality of life. Indeed, loneliness, isolation and depression are the scourge of seniors, especially for those living with dementia. Trained Recreation Therapy professionals have the critical-thinking and skill sets to develop supports, programs and services to improve quality of life.

- Take for example in LTC. Of course, health and personal care must be a priority, but once people are fed and dressed, what do they do with the rest of their day? Residents need to have meaningful programs and experiences to fill their day. I am not referring just to group activities such as bingo, although there is indeed a place for that type of activity, but I am talking about experiences that truly address the needs and essence of the person. For instance: in one home a gentleman who had dementia was becoming quite agitated late in the afternoon. It wasn't until the Rec Therapist realized the root cause of the behaviour that a cost-effective and easy fix was discovered. It turned out that he and his wife used to go to Tim Horton's every afternoon for a coffee – he was missing that routine and his afternoon coffee. So the TR purchased Tim Horton coffee pods and cups and she makes sure that every afternoon someone sits with him for a few minutes and shares in a cup of coffee. So how does that help government deliver programs and services? Rather than spending money to medicate him or worse, ignore him to the point where his behaviour escalated and the BSO team had to be called in, all it took was for a Recreation Therapist who had the skills and understanding of therapeutic supports to figure out the issue and create a personalized, yet cost-effective solution. Research demonstrates that TR contributes to improvement in functional capacity, decreased responsive behaviours, loneliness, boredom and depression, and increased life satisfaction, self-worth and quality of life. Furthermore, TR provides non-pharmacological interventions that have positive results without negative side effects.

- Recreation Therapists also play a key role in community programs – which can help decrease hospital admissions and contribute to ending hallway medicine. One such example are ACT Teams which provide support to people in community who have complex mental health illness. The qualified Recreation Therapist has the skills to deescalate situations and work with individuals to develop alternative coping mechanisms through leisure and recreation.
- With only 3 minutes, I've tried to highlight that Rec Therapy can indeed contribute to improved delivery of government-funded programs and services and address hospital issues. To do so, we recommend:
  - that government study the role and value of Recreation Therapy in institutional and community-based health care and social service programs.
  - the establishment of hiring standards including consistent education requirements, job titles and compensation for Recreation Therapists regardless of sector.
  - the establishment of a life enrichment protected envelope of funding that supports TR in LTC settings, including reducing the ratio of residents to Recreation Therapists.
- Thank you.