

September 17, 2020

Honourable Justice Frank N. Marrocco
Lead Commissioner
Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission
24th Floor, 700 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z6

Dear Hon. Justice Marrocco:

Therapeutic Recreation Ontario supports the provincial government's announcement to establish an independent commission into Ontario's Long-Term Care (LTC) system. On behalf of the 1800 members of Therapeutic Recreation Ontario, I am writing to formally request our involvement in the discussion to create a Long-Term Care environment in which residents will not only be safe, but will *thrive*.

The COVID -19 pandemic has amplified the urgency for LTC reform. The time for change is now and the inclusion of skilled Therapeutic Recreation professionals as part of the commission process to reform Long Term Care is critical.

Therapeutic Recreation is essential to creating an environment of living a full life. In Long-Term Care, therapeutic recreation is not about diversional therapy, activity for the sake of being busy or a distraction. *Indeed, in the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 states that "... a long-term care home is primarily the home of its residents and is to be operated so that it is a place where they may live with dignity and in security, safety and comfort and have their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs adequately met."* This fundamental right is directly aligned with Therapeutic Recreation's value and mission in providing enhanced quality of life through means of those domains listed above.

But don't take just our word for it, here's what Therapeutic Recreation means to residents:

Resident Reflections

"Recreation Services are extremely important to offer residents in Long Term Care. This essential service is part of our life and what we define as home. Resident Council brings a sense of belonging and inclusion. We have a voice together with help from Recreation staff. Without Recreation, everyday would bring boredom with no sense of belonging with other residents. An absence of recreation for each residents' interest is a decline in our individual well-being." – Tom Edmondson, Riverview Gardens, Long Term Care, Active member of Resident Council

Elaine is an 85 year old woman with dementia, who had recently moved into a long-term care home. When asked what mattered most to her, she spoke up and said, 'I just wish someone would dance with me'. She emphasised that people were taking good care of her physical needs – making sure she was dressed and fed and clean and warm – but what she most wanted was for someone to stop and just dance with her.

"For many of us, we withdraw because we are not provided with meaningful opportunities that allow us to continue to experience joy, purpose, and engagement in life." – LTC Resident

The simplicities of life are often taken for granted until they are taken away. Long Term Care should not be devoid of what brings joy to life. It should offer an environment that fosters and promotes overall quality of life and well-being to all in the long-term care setting, including residents, team members/staff, and family members to *thrive*.

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

We look forward to hearing from you regarding the involvement of Therapeutic Recreation.

Sincerely,



Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, CAE
Executive Director



Leanne Hughes, R/TRO, CTRS
Chair, LTC Task Force

cc: Angela Coke, Commissioner
Dr. Jack Kitts, Commissioner
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care merrilee.fullerton@pc.ola.org,
Merrilee.fullerton@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).