



**THERAPEUTIC
RECREATION
ONTARIO**

February 19, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Therapeutic Recreation Ontario, we are writing to express our deep concern about the recent announcement of the changes to the Therapeutic Recreation services held over the weekends within the Oakvalley Healthcare System.

The removal of Therapeutic Recreation support on the weekends is deeply concerning and represents a loss not only to patients but to the integrity of hospital-based, person-centred care as a whole.

Therapeutic Recreation is not an “extra” service. In a hospital setting, recreation therapy supports physical function, cognitive engagement, emotional regulation, social connection, and dignity for individuals living with chronic illness, disability, and prolonged hospitalization.

When Therapeutic Recreation is removed, the impact is felt across the entire system. Patients lose access to individualized, evidence-based interventions that support coping and recovery. Evidence shows, lack of meaningful, structured activity in hospitals leads to boredom, emotional distress, loss of autonomy, and a reduced sense of purpose, particularly for older adults (Clarke et al., 2018). Reliance on passive activities such as television represents missed opportunities to support coping and recovery (Nelson, 2018).

Therefore, the resulting emotional, behavioural, and psycho-social needs will be addressed by Nurses, Personal Support Workers, Social Workers, Occupational and Physical Therapists, and other professionals who are already stretched and whose roles are not designed to replace our interventions. Families will start to witness a narrowing of care that prioritizes survival over living.

Recreation Therapists across Ontario are watching closely, knowing that cuts like these set a precedent that threatens similar programs elsewhere. This climate undermines workforce stability, erodes morale, and places evidence-based, patient-centred services at ongoing risk. When skilled clinicians are left waiting to see if their roles will be eliminated, it is not only professionals who suffer—it is patients, families, and the quality of care across the province.

Cuts like this send a troubling message about whose needs are considered essential in our healthcare system. Hospital care must address the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—especially for those in complex care, long-term care, rehabilitation, and palliative care who are most vulnerable to isolation, deconditioning, and loss of autonomy.

We respectfully ask for the reinstatement of Recreation Therapy services and transparent consultation moving forward. Collective, thoughtful advocacy is essential to ensuring that hospital decisions reflect both fiscal responsibility and the values of person-centred care.

Therapeutic Recreation is healthcare. Our patients deserve more than maintenance—they deserve meaning, dignity, and opportunities to engage in life, even within hospital walls.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to future collaborations.



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