

Written Submission Re: Bill 175-Connecting People to Care Act

Submitted by: Veronica MacDonald, VP, Independent Living
The Neighbourhood Group

June 16, 2020

The Neighbourhood Group Community Services
349 Ontario St.
Toronto, ON M5A 2V8

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Members of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly
99 Wellesley St. West
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Re: Written Submission with Recommendations for Bill 175, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020.

The Neighbourhood Group (TNG), an amalgamation of Central Neighbourhood House (founded in 1911) and Neighbourhood Link Support Services (founded in 1975) and St. Stephen's Community House (founded in 1962), helps over 55,000 vulnerable people by delivering programs and services that create opportunities to improve and enhance people's lives and help them to live independently and with dignity in the community. With 700 employees, 2,200 volunteers and a \$48M budget, TNG serves some of our city's most at-risk groups including frail seniors, adults who are ill or disabled, marginalized children, youth and their families, newcomers, people who are homeless or precariously housed and those searching for employment.

One of TNG's legacy programs is providing Home and Community Care to over 1,500 clients on a yearly basis. These services are carried out by about 200 Personal Support Workers (PSW), throughout the city of Toronto. We have been serving clients, paired with the same PSW in some cases for over 25 years. It is this kind of stable connection and quality of care, that we feel is at risk of being dismantled by Bill 175, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020.

Bill 175 is opening up the door to more for-profit agencies to be able to enter into contracts in providing home and community care services. Unlike non-profit agencies, these businesses do not provide a holistic approach to care. Not only does TNG offer PSW contracted services, we also offer a basket of other services which support our clients to remain at home for as long as possible. By providing a host of services such as Meals on Wheels, access to Adult Day Programs, supportive housing, opportunities for social and recreational activities, case management and caregiver respite relief among others, we reduce hospital visits, overall stress on the healthcare system, and save health and social service costs.

Not only do we provide wrap-around care within our own agency but TNG also connects clients to other local resources when we are unable to fill the gap. Our decades-long relationships with other community support service agencies, community health centres, hospitals, city programs, donors and local businesses who sponsor many of our client programs and activities, are an additional buffer in avoiding the institutionalization of client care while saving the health care system dollars.

TNG and other not-for-profit organizations are embedded in their communities and have been so for over a century in some cases. We are invested in ensuring quality care to those who live in these same communities. We will not be bailing on clients if we run into financial difficulty. We will not be leaving the community when times get tough. Rather we will continue to get even more creative so that our clients, our neighbours, will not be left high and dry, without care.

Lastly, it is evident that Home and Community Care services have more than proven their worth during these past few months of the pandemic, reporting lower infection and mortality rates. The sector has been working in high gear, proving its abilities, so we would ask the government to allow time for a more considered response which allows us to strengthen our partnership with government in the care of Ontario residents.

We therefore request the consideration of the following points with respect to the development and implementation of Bill 175:

- Delay the process so that community agencies who will be affected by these changes may have the opportunity to collaborate and provide input to the final proposal
- Review the plethora of data/evidence which points to the benefits of keeping Home and Community Care in the realm of non-profit delivery of care
- Ensure that Home and Community Care services remain fully accountable to the public through the governance model
- Ensure that there are no conflicts of competing priorities (i.e. profit versus client need) between those who are making the decisions about number of client care service hours and those in need of the care
- Introduce legislation that ensures decent work for PSWs across the system, and prioritizes excellent labour practices in all contracting

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing more on how TNG can assist you in ensuring consistent and quality care to the 750, 000 individuals who receive Home and Community Care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "V. MacDonald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica MacDonald, RP
Vice President, Independent Living-TNG

Cc: Jessica Bell, MPP, University-Rosedale
Suze Morrison, MPP, Toronto-Centre
Peter Tabuns, MPP, Toronto-Danforth
Rima Berns-McGown, MPP, Beaches-East York