

November 19, 2021

99 Wellesley Street West
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A7

Dear Chair Scott and Members of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly,

I am writing on behalf of CLAC to express our support for the Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors, and Building More Beds Act, 2021. As you know and your colleagues may be aware, CLAC is an independent labour union representing approximately 9,000 workers in the long-term care sector, retirement homes and other health care workplaces.

For many years now, our members have long been calling on the government to support a shift to providing additional care in long term care homes. We are pleased to see the Ford government acting and view the introduction of legislation to establish a provincial commitment with interim, annual targets as a very meaningful step for our members. This increase in staff hours will provide our members with the time to care for the residents in their care. For residents the move to 4 hours, provided it is hands on care from PSW's and registered nursing staff, will provide much needed improvements to the quality, safety, and dignity of care.

The accountability, enforcement and transparency changes will also be important for the sector. The changes to the Bill or Rights will help to ensure that residents are kept safe and well cared for and the quality improvement measures will help to focus the leadership of homes on cultural and systemic changes that are needed. Our only caution on the accountability and enforcement side is to ensure that the compliance does not exacerbate the culture of fear that plagues the sector today and leads to poor care outcomes.

With respect to the modernization of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Act, we wish to commend these changes as well on behalf of the residents our members care for. Retirement homes today are not the country club residences of 20 years ago. Retirement homes are care facilities and the changes in the proposed Bill will assist in providing better oversight of the facilities and stronger alignment with law enforcement and other agencies for better protection of staff and residents.

CLAC does wish to express concern that steps were not taken to address the gap in workplace protections for workers when modernizing protections for staff and residents in retirement homes. Workers in this sector are not covered for injury or illness through the Workers Safety and Insurance Board. These workers have workplace injury coverage that is provided privately and is woefully inadequate for the risks present in these workplaces. Further private insurance does not cover workers who contract viruses in the workplace like COVID-19 that require them to be off work to protect the people in their care and their co-workers. This bill is just one of many bills recently that has missed this important change and that should be addressed.



We do appreciate the opportunity to comment on the positive changes in this important legislation and to highlight an important gap. Thank you for the work you and your colleagues do on behalf of Ontarians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ian DeWaard', with a stylized, elongated flourish extending to the right.

Ian DeWaard
Provincial Director