

Presentation to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly on Bill 37, Providing More Care, protecting Seniors, and Building More Beds Act, 2021
By Sue VanderBent, CEO, Home Care Ontario
November 24, 2021

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Good afternoon.

Thank you for having me here today.

My name is Sue VanderBent, and I am the CEO of Home Care Ontario, which is the voice of home care in Ontario.

My members are the heart and hands of home care.

They provide over 59 million of hours of care to Ontarians every year.

My members employ more than 28,000 professional home care staff who provide high quality home care to over a million Ontarians every year.

To put this in perspective, home care now provides more care than any other part of Ontario's health care system.

This includes a range of professional and specialized services, including nursing, personal support, physio, occupational, and speech therapy, respiratory therapists, infusion pharmacy, home support services, medical equipment and devices, social work and so much more.

Many of these services include supporting seniors living in Retirement Homes across the province. This in turn, allows them to receive a wide range of supports so they can continue to age with dignity and independence.

It is, therefore, my pleasure to be here today to speak in support of Bill 37, which is an important step forward in strengthening the province's health care system.

While I know there are a number of aspects to the proposed legislation, my comments will focus on Home Care Ontario's support for modernizing the Retirement Homes Act in a way that maintains choice and quality care for seniors through continued access to vital home care services.

By way of context, it is important to note that Retirement Homes are considered an individuals' residence where they can receive either Home and Community Care Support Services (previously the LHIN) funded services or family-funded home care services to help them age independently and in place.

Home care has been providing additional supports in retirement homes for decades in fact.

This support has taken the form of additional hours to supplement the personal care to residents that homes deliver, as well as the services of integrated interprofessional teams who work with residents to establish goals for health, wellness, and functional improvement.

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In addition, Retirement Homes have increasingly called upon home care providers in recent years to support higher-needs residents with specialized care teams to ensure they continue to receive high quality care as their care needs increase.

The increased demand for these services from our aging population, along with COVID-19, demonstrated that home care is more important than ever in helping those age where they want and where they feel safe – in their homes.

Simply put, the pandemic has changed everything – but the good news is that Ontario's home care professionals are trained and prepared to support our loved ones safely at home.

We are pleased that the government has recognized the critical role that home care plays within Retirement Homes and has maintained the current service delivery model that provides high-quality care to residents in a way that maintains their independence.

It will be critical that this commitment is also reflected in the regulations, and we look forward to working closely with government to ensure that vision becomes the lived reality for seniors across the province.

I want to conclude my remarks by highlighting the need for the government to review the lessons learned through COVID-19, particularly in terms of Pandemic Planning and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) protocols and build them into the regulations accompanying the new bill as well.

Specifically, Home care providers have worked diligently to develop sector leading IPAC practices, including screening and personal protective equipment requirements that resulted in the lowest infection or transmission rate of any part of the health care system.

These IPAC practices were often developed directly between homes and home care providers and Home Care Ontario recommends the establishment of Pandemic Plans to standardize the process throughout the province and further recommends that homes have designated IPAC leads that are appropriately trained and credentialled.

It will also be important that essential visitors including home & community care support personnel can continue to provide these vital services during a pandemic to preserve the health and safety of all residents. which we know can be done safely.

I want to thank you again for having me here today to speak in support of the Bill.

Bill 37 is an important piece of legislation and will help establish a system for the 21st century that can deliver more and better care in Retirement Homes across the province.

With that, I would be happy to take any of your questions.