



Response to Bill 37,
*Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors,
and Building More Beds Act, 2021*

Submission to the Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly

November 25, 2021

Committee Members,

First, we thank the government for its focus on long-term care services in Ontario.

This is a sector that supports the quality of life and care of a remarkable group of people: our seniors. It also supports the livelihoods of an equally remarkable group: our care teams — the exceptional and dedicated nurses, personal support workers, dietary aides, social workers and hundreds of others that make our communities comfortable, loving places to live and call home.

Sadly, this sector has been sorely underfunded for decades. Old, substandard homes have not been redeveloped to serve the needs of today's seniors. Support to train, build out and keep staffing levels healthy has likewise not kept up.

We are heartened by the efforts of this government to improve the system for the better, and we are excited to do our part to help.

About Extendicare

Extendicare has been providing long-term care services to Ontarians since 1969. We employ nearly 6,000 people in our 34 long-term care homes in Ontario. About 8,000 residents in Ontario live in an Extendicare home, with Extendicare Assist serving an additional 4,000 more people in homes owned by a variety of not-for-profit, municipal and private operators.

Our mission is to help people live better. We work closely with governments, community agencies, researchers and care partners — including families — to address the needs of our residents, close gaps in access to care, solve problems facing seniors' communities and advance best practices for our sector.

Extendicare, and our care teams across the province, represent a significant part of the long-term care sector in Ontario. This scope of service brings insight into how things work, what effective care teams require, how resident needs vary, and where improvements can be made, quickly and efficiently, to best serve our residents.

We are proud of the role we play in long-term care, and we are committed to it.

Our Improving Care Plan

Extendicare is a mission-driven organization with a collective commitment to continuous improvement. Our efforts in this regard are focused on five key areas:

- 1) **Improve the quality of life for those we care for** by increasing the number of full-time caregivers to meet a minimum four hours of care per day; working more closely with other care providers like hospitals and physicians; and adding to our specialized clinical capabilities.
- 2) **Support the success of our team members** by fostering their training, development, learning, and career advancement.
- 3) **Engage residents and families** as partners in care and organizational change.

- 4) **Replace or upgrade all of our older long-term care homes** with three new homes under construction in Sudbury, Kingston and Stittsville and six more homes on track to begin construction over the next two years.
- 5) **Increase transparency and accountability** through measurement and reporting on progress against goals for improved service and quality of care.

Our Response to Bill 37, Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors, and Building More Beds Act, 2021

We are very grateful that the government has introduced legislation that will work to improve staffing and care, protect residents, and build modern, safe, comfortable homes for seniors.

At Extendicare, we are committed to building a stronger long-term care and seniors' care sector in Ontario. We support the legislation as proposed and are prepared to do our part in upholding its commitment to improving care.

In addition to the changes proposed in Bill 37, we see an opportunity for additional actions that can, and should, be implemented through Bill 37 and related regulations to further strengthen our system and ultimately offer better care for the people we care for and their families.

Our recommendations include:

1. Increase staff supply and capacity, with flexibility for resident needs

- The commitment to a target of an average of four hours of direct care per resident per day and the associated funding is a significant step towards improved care for residents in long-term care.
- The skill mix of staff to provide this care must be flexible to address the diverse and unique needs of individual residents and should include the resident support aide (RSA) position which has become an integral part of our care teams during the pandemic and should be permitted to continue.
- Flexibility must also be enabled, in specific circumstances, to address challenges that arise from the inability to recruit certain professions in particular locations (for example there is a significant difficulty in recruiting sufficient nurses in rural and remote areas).

2. Strengthen relationships and integration with hospitals and the broader health system

- We support the more detailed requirements for the Infection Prevention and Control Program outlined in the proposed legislation as well as the requirement that each home have a clinical lead whose primary responsibility is the home's infection prevention and control program.
- These professionals should be supported by their counterparts in local hospitals, and we recommend there be a regional IPAC team available for deployment to a home in the event of a large infectious outbreak.
- Ensure the IPAC leads for each LTC home have an established relationship with the IPAC team at the local hospital.
- Establish partnerships between LTC homes and local hospital networks for clinical matters and support for residents.

3. Standardize medical leadership for all long-term care homes

- Standardize the term “medical leader” in homes for the roles of medical directors, nurse practitioners and attending physicians and create a standardized job description for each role.
- Set a provincial minimum number of hours per month for the Medical Director role and compensate appropriately.
- Develop an enhanced annual review process for Medical Directors based on the standard role description.
- Make the Ontario Long-Term Care Clinicians Medical Director Course mandatory, to be completed within two years of becoming a Medical Director.
- Explore the value of a regional medical leader models and communities of practice to help scale and spread quality improvement initiatives.

4. Enhance physician support for long-term care homes

- Increase compensation for physician contracts with long-term care homes.
- Set specific requirements for in-person physician support for residents based on emerging quality of care evidence.
- Continue to increase access to virtual speciality services to support integrated care and reduce the need for transfers to the local hospital.

5. Focus increased inspection and enforcement efforts on Quality Assurance *and* Improvement

- We appreciate the recognition in the proposed legislation of the need to foster an environment that supports continuous quality improvement and innovation.
- This should be supported through the inspection process so that
 - struggling homes receive the advice and resources necessary to improve performance, and
 - high-performing homes receive recognition for achievement beyond minimum standards.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a tragedy on a global scale. It exposed weaknesses in our health-care system, particularly the gaps in long-term care that have burdened our sector for decades.

At Extendicare, we are focused on learning from the pandemic to build a better future for seniors’ care. We have taken action inside our own organization with the launch of our Improving Care Plan, our national, multi-year plan to improve care, every day, across every home we operate. However, to meet the needs of the growing seniors’ population and to address systemic issues, there must be a concerted and collaborative effort made with government to truly transform the way we support seniors and their families.

We welcome the opportunity to support government in our shared commitment to improve care for Ontario’s seniors.