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Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

**Long-Term Care Transformation: Proposed New National Standard for Mental Health and Well-Being in Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Settings**

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## 1. Recommendations

1. Council, in its role as Committee of Management for the Region's two long-term care homes, endorse the submission made by staff on a new draft national standard to support mental health and well-being of residents in long-term care and assisted living settings, provided in Attachment 1, submitted to the Canadian Standards Association Group on November 17, 2023.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to York Region Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament, Minister of Long-Term Care, Minister of Health, Minister of Seniors and Accessibility, Ontario Health Central Region, Home and Community Care Support Services Central, Ontario Health Teams in York Region, AdvantAge Ontario, Ontario Long-Term Care Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

## 2. Purpose

As part of its obligations as the Committee of Management under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, Council is to be informed of: (1) The Regional Municipality of York's obligations as the 'licensee' of York Region's two long-term care homes, Newmarket Health Centre and Maple Health Centre (the Homes), and (2) any legislative or regulatory changes impacting the Region's Homes.

This report requests Council endorse the submission (Attachment 1) made by staff to the Canadian Standards Association Group on their new draft national standard on the mental health and well-being of residents in long-term care and assisted living settings ([CAN/CSA Z2004:23](#)). Obtaining Council's endorsement prior to submission was not possible due to consultation deadlines.

## Key Points:

- On [September 18, 2023](#), the Canadian Standards Association Group announced a public review of the new draft national standard on the mental health and well-being of residents in long-term care and assisted living settings, with feedback due by November 17, 2023
- The Canadian Standards Association Group developed this standard to provide guidance and improve care in long-term care and assisted living
- The draft new standard aims to ensure high quality care for residents in long-term care and assisted living settings nationwide, promoting mental health and well-being
- The Region's submission was supportive of the draft new national standard, making recommendations that build on the Region's previous advocacy and identify the need for funding and Federal and Provincial support ahead of implementation
- Initial analysis shows the Homes meet 84.4% of the 96 standard requirements
- Obtaining Council's endorsement of the Region's submission on the draft new standard prior to its submission was not possible due to deadlines set by the Canadian Standards Association Group for feedback. The Canadian Standards Association Group would not accept additional commentary after the closing date.

## 3. Background

### **York Region has a strong history of advocacy to improve policy, planning and decision-making for long-term care at provincial and national levels**

Staff feedback on this new draft national standard builds on the Region's advocacy to improve policy planning and decision-making for long-term care with submissions to:

- The [Ontario Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission](#) ([January 2021](#))
- The Ministry of Long-Term Care on our [detailed analysis](#) of Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission's Final Report and Recommendations for [Urgent Provincial Action](#) ([October 2021](#))
- The Ministry of Long-Term Care on Regulations under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* (Phase 1 in [April 2022](#) and Phase 2 in [April 2023](#))
- The [Health Standards Organization](#) on the then draft national standard for Long-Term Care Services ([CAN/HSO 21001:2023](#)) ([April 2022](#))
- The [Canadian Standards Association Group](#) on the then-draft national standard for Operation and Infection Prevention and Control of Long-Term Care Homes ([CSA Z8004: 22](#)) ([May 2022](#))

- Health Canada on development of a *Safe Long-Term Care Act* and implementation of national standards ([October 2023](#))

The October 2023 report confirmed of the 92 comments provided by the Region in its first submission to the Canadian Standards Association Group, 84 were successfully reflected in the final standard.

### **This new draft national standard on mental health is in addition to two recent national standards for long-term care**

The new draft national standard on residents' mental health and well-being in long-term care and assisted living settings is **in addition** to two national standards Health Canada is considering through development of the *Safe Long-Term Care Act* (specifically, CAN/HSO 21001:2023 and CSA Z8004: 22). This draft national standard focuses on person-centered care, equity, diversity, inclusion, cultural safety and humility, and would support the mental health and well-being of residents and workers in long-term care and assisted living settings. York Region operates two long-term care homes and does not operate any assisted living settings.

It is unclear if Health Canada will encourage provinces and territories to adopt this additional new standard as part of the development the *Safe Long-Term Care Act*.

### **Medical care needs, including mental health concerns, are growing and becoming increasingly complex among long-term care residents**

Residents living in long-term care homes are generally older and often live with serious, chronic, or multiple health conditions, disability, and frailty.

Based on background information cited in the draft standard:

- The majority (76%) of long-term care residents have a diagnosis of a mental health condition or dementia
- 40% of long-term care residents have clinically significant, active mental health needs
- Other than dementia, the most common mental health conditions seen among long-term care residents include major depression and anxiety disorders
- Residents of long-term care homes are particularly vulnerable to delirium, which has an incidence of 40% during the course of a long-term care stay
- Most persons with dementia in long-term care (78%) have changes in mood, personality, or behaviour. In particular, one in five residents with dementia exhibits aggression.

## **The Region has implemented provincial programs to support the mental health and increasing medical complexity of long-term care residents**

The provincial government has invested in programs to support the health and wellbeing of long-term care residents. For 2022/2023 the Homes received just over \$1.8 million in additional funding to implement the following programs to support the mental health and well-being of residents:

- **Resident Health and Well-Being Program** improves resident access to social support services from Registered Social Workers, Social Service Workers and other Allied Health Professionals. Long-term care homes are encouraged to aim for a best practice minimum of 30 minutes of care per resident every four weeks.
- **Psychogeriatric Resource Consultant Program** funded through Ontario Health to educate staff across 29 long-term care homes and community agencies in York Region. The Program offers education on topics including Dementia, Parkinson, Delirium, Depression, Responsive Behaviours, Angry outbursts/escalation and client specific case-based learning.
- **Behavioural Support Resource Nurse** at each Home. This nurse helps ensure residents with cognitive/responsive behaviours are well-supported in the Homes.
- **Supporting Professional Growth Funding** supports ongoing education and training of staff that have a direct impact on residents in long-term care homes. This funding has supported staff training on the Gentle Persuasive Approach which is an innovative dementia care education curriculum based on a person-centred care approach.

## **4. Analysis**

### **Initial analysis shows the Homes are well-positioned to meet most standard requirements**

As reported to Council in [June 2023](#), the Homes have developed a Seniors Services Transformation Plan that will improve structure and staffing, leadership and learning, ways of working, and culture and wellbeing at the Homes. The plan is aligned with several requirements of the draft national standard, for example, reducing reliance on temporary staffing (7.3.3 Continuity of care) and establishing relationships with community organizations (5 Organizational commitment to mental health and well-being). Staff plan to research alternative models of care in 2025, (7.3.6 Models and 11.1.5 Models).

Initial analysis shows the Homes meet 84.4% of the 96 proposed requirements of the standard. See Attachment 2 for details.

### **The Region's submission was supportive of the draft new national standard**

To prepare a comprehensive submission to the Canadian Standards Association Group, staff consulted with staff from Seniors Services and People, Equity and Culture. Additionally, staff

participated in consultations with sector organizations such as AdvantAge Ontario on their submission and sought feedback from sector organizations including the Region's local Ontario Health Teams, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. The Region's submission to the Canadian Standards Association Group (Attachment 1) included 24 recommendations, with the main recommendations being:

- Include staff who support restorative care and palliative care philosophies as specialized mental health workers and resources needed to implement innovative care models
- Prioritize dementia design when renovating or building new long-term care homes
- Child-friendly areas, lounges and private rooms where families can visit for longer periods including staying overnight should be considered within long-term care homes undergoing bed redevelopment or new buildings only
- Complying with this standard would require full funding, guidance and tools to make the standard effective for residents and staff

## 5. Financial Considerations

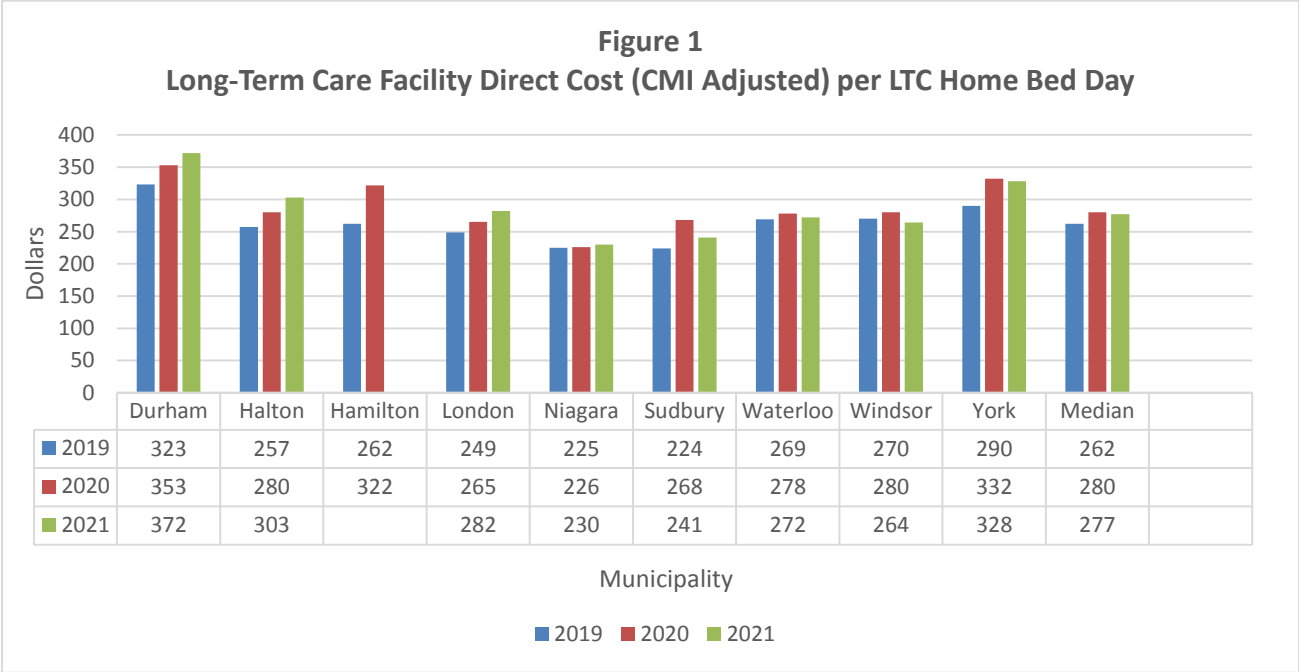
### Long-term care operating costs per bed vary across municipalities with most relying on tax levy

In 2022, the Homes received 60% of funding (\$34.6 million) from the Province, 10% (\$5.4 million) from resident fees and 30% (\$17.5 million) from a tax levy. Municipal homes typically rely on tax levy funding. Table 1 shows the proportion of operating costs covered by tax levy funding for six municipalities in southern Ontario where data was available.

**Table 1**  
**Municipal Property Tax Contributions for Long-Term Care (2020)**

Municipality	Number of Homes	Number of Municipal Long-Term Care Beds	Proportion of Municipal Funding
City of Toronto	10	2,527	Approx. 20%
Durham Region	4	845	42%
Halton Region	3	572	32%
Niagara Region	9	974	10%
Simcoe County	4	534	Approx. 20%
York Region	2	232	44.6%

York Region’s Homes operated at a cost of \$328 per resident per day in 2022, positioning them on the higher end among reporting municipalities (Figure 1). This is primarily due to the Region having fewer municipal long-term care beds compared to other areas (Table 1), making achieving economies of scale difficult.



Source: MBNCanada, 2021

**National standards are not federally legislated and would require funding, provincial support and additional guidance ahead of implementation**

Like other national standards, this draft new national standard is not federally or provincially legislated at this time and there is no immediate impact on the operations of our long-term care Homes or members of the Committee of Management. Attachment 2 shows that the Region’s Homes are well-positioned to meet 84.4% of requirements in the proposed new standard.

Fulfilling requirements of an additional national standard for long-term care requires additional funding, as it would build on the current *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, the [Long-Term Care Home Design Manual 2015](#), and the Commission of Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities Aging Services Manual standards. For example, the Homes would not currently meet the following components of the draft national standard as they are beyond current requirements long-term care homes in Ontario are required to meet:

- **Family areas:** For younger residents parenting minor children, the Long-Term Care and Assisted Living setting should offer child-friendly areas and lounges and private rooms where families can visit for longer periods including staying overnight.

**Status:** The Homes do not have the infrastructure to offer child-friendly areas and lounges and private rooms where families can visit for longer periods including staying overnight.

- **Lighting:** The Long-Term Care and Assisted Living setting shall provide residents with illumination which simulates the natural and diurnal variation of light exposure to have a positive effect on mood and sleep. Lighting to promote circadian rhythm shall be of a higher intensity white upon waking and throughout the day. Three hours prior to bedtime, the lighting should transition to warmer, lower intensity lighting.

**Status:** The Homes do not have lighting with rich blue spectral wave lengths (460-520 nm) or full spectrum white light, to help cue wakefulness and would need to upgrade the existing lighting to provide illumination which simulates the natural and diurnal variation of light exposure and the promotes circadian rhythm as set out in the standard.

## 6. Local Impact

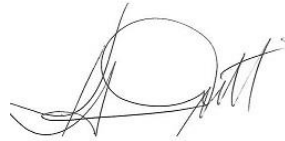
Additional information is needed to assess the potential impact of this national standard, if adopted, on the Region's two Homes and their residents.

## 7. Conclusion

The Homes are well-positioned to meet 84.4% of the requirements in the proposed new standard. Success in implementing any national standard will depend on how issues related to legislation, regulation, funding, resources and accountability are resolved. Staff will continue to monitor all national standards related to long-term care and how these changes may influence the legislative, regulatory and accreditation landscape of long-term care and report back to Council as appropriate.

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For more information on this report, please contact Lisa Gonsalves, General Manager at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 7209. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

**Katherine Chislett**  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

**Erin Mahoney**  
Chief Administrative Officer

December 15, 2023  
15830312

Attachment 1 – Submission to the Canadian Standards Association Group on Proposed National Standard for Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being in Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Settings (15830313)

Attachment 2 – Analysis of Proposed National Standard (15902554)