



**STAFF REPORT  
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Service Agreement between the City of Toronto Homes for the Aged and the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)**

<b>Date:</b>	November 13, 2007
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Homes for the Aged
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

**SUMMARY**

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In June 2005, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) introduced a new assessment tool for Ontario’s long-term care homes, through the Long-Term Care Homes (LTCH) Common Assessment Project. The purpose was to introduce a standardized assessment form and process called the Resident Assessment Instrument – Minimum Data Set (RAI-MDS). The RAI MDS has undergone extensive testing in over 21 countries and has been found to be a very reliable tool.

The RAI MDS is comprehensive assessment tool that “flags” actual and potential care needs in a timely fashion. It provides a structured, standardized, interdisciplinary approach to care planning and provides statistical data for quality improvement, performance assessment and benchmarking.

Since the introduction in June, 2005 with ten (10) homes involved in the initial pilot project, the MOHLTC has proceeded under a phased implementation plan; there are now over two-hundred and thirty (230) homes across the province participating in the RAI-MDS project, with MOHLTC plans to expand further in the near future. The long-range goal is to have all long-term care homes in the province using the RAI-MDS system.

When the MOHLTC implemented RAI-MDS, participating long-term care homes reported their data for quality improvement, performance assessment and benchmarking directly to the MOHLTC. With the significant expansion of the RAI-MDS project, the MOHLTC wishes to revise the system to require long-term care homes to submit their data directly to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), so that the MOHLTC is able to utilize CIHI’s expertise in health information systems.

CIHI is an independent, national, not-for-profit organization with the mandate to improve the health of Canadians and the health care system by providing quality health information. Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments created CIHI as an independent organization dedicated to form a common approach to Canadian health information. CIHI has a Privacy Secretariat headed by a Chief Privacy Officer who has delegated authority from the President and CEO to manage the privacy program.

One of the components of RAI-MDS includes providing specific personal information (non-identifying) and personal health information (non-identifying) about residents in long-term care homes to the MOHLTC. When this information was directly submitted to the MOHLTC, City Legal verified that the transmission was mandated by the MOHLTC and thus required by the homes as the service delivery agent. City Legal advises that the revised process in which the homes would be submitting health information directly to CIHI requires specific City Council approval. The report outlines the requirements and the rationale.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Homes for the Aged recommends that:

1. approval be given for staff to negotiate and enter into a service agreement with the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) with respect to the City's submission of, access to and use of CIHI's electronic Continuing Care Reporting System;
2. the General Manager, Homes for the Aged, be given authority to execute the service agreement in a form and content satisfactory to the City Solicitor; and
3. the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

## **COMMENTS**

Staff from Homes for the Aged consulted with City Legal and Corporate Access and Privacy to determine the best approach in meeting the MOHLTC's revised instructions for RAI-MDS information submission. Their combined review and analysis concluded that the CIHI Continuing Care Reporting System captures information on individuals in publicly funded health care organizations from across Canada, primarily from hospitals and from long-term care homes. They also concluded that the information to be submitted

to CIHI was non-identifying (as outlined below) and was required by the MOHLTC to establish policy direction for its health care programs, including long-term care homes.

Staff found that to date, the MOHLTC has had their service agreement with CIHI. The MOHLTC has checked the submitted data for accuracy and then has transferred the data to CIHI. Given the volume of long-term care homes now using RAI-MDS (and the projected number of long-term care homes using RAI-MDS in the future), the MOHLTC wishes to change this relationship for its long-term care homes program and require long-term care homes to report the information directly to CIHI.

Staff found that CIHI has developed a program that allows health care organization to upload information directly on a quarterly basis. However, although residents' names from the long-term care homes are not provided, health care numbers are extracted, which could make the data identifiable if this information is linked to other systems.

Toronto Homes for the Aged has a privacy statement that complies with the requirements of the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). The division is committed to communicating its processes about privacy to all residents and clients in an open and transparent manner. Therefore, Toronto Homes for the Aged will add language in the existing privacy statement to clarify that the homes collect and disclose information to CIHI for the purpose of health policy research and performance assessment, if a direct service agreement between Toronto Homes for the Aged and CIHI is authorized by City Council.

Further, Corporate Access and Privacy (CAP) staff suggest that the City require CIHI to be restricted from linking health care numbers to other systems that would identify individuals and that CIHI advise the City of the retention period for information submitted so that this clarification may be added to an updated Toronto Homes for the Aged privacy statement.

Staff from Toronto Homes for the Aged, CAP and City Legal have agreed upon concepts and draft language for consideration in a service agreement that protects residents yet provides the opportunity for the homes to be part of the RAI-MDS project, thus supporting the goals of accountability, health system planning, quality and policy development.

Currently, five (5) of the City's Homes for the Aged participate in the RAI-MDS project, with information being submitted to the MOHLTC and the MOHLTC uploading the information to CIHI. Toronto Homes for the Aged has applied for the other five (5) Homes for the Aged to become involved in the RAI-MDS project. It is therefore important to resolve the issue of direct information transfer to CIHI and determine if the City will enter into the requisite service agreement with CIHI.

## SUMMARY

CIHI coordinates the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and integrated health information system for the majority of Canada's health care organizations. It is responsible for providing accurate and timely information that is needed to establish sound health policies, manage the Canadian health system effectively and create public awareness of factors affecting good health.

CIHI was created by the federal, provincial and territorial governments as an independent organization dedicated to form a common approach to Canadian health information. CIHI has a Privacy Secretariat headed by a Chief Privacy Officer who has delegated authority from the President and CEO to manage the privacy program.

The MOHLTC has selected CIHI to receive and analyze the non-identifying personal information and personal health information about residents in Ontario's long-term care homes that form the basis of the RAI-MDS assessment tool and process. Although the information under the RAI-MDS is non-identifying and submitted in an aggregate fashion, City Legal has advised that the homes are unable to submit the required information directly to CIHI without the approval of City Council, as there is currently no authority for staff to provide this information to any organization except the MOHLTC itself.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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