
City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM28.14	ACTION			Ward: All
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The More Time Lost. The More Lives Lost: A Call to Reform Ontario's COVID-19 Response in Long-Term Care Homes and Approach to Care - by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Province of Ontario to:
 - a. accelerate distributing the full dosage of available vaccines around the clock to all residents, caregivers and workers in long term care homes and congregate care settings and address vaccine hesitancy amongst residents and workers;
 - b. address the dangerous staffing shortages through stabilizing the workforce by offering more full-time employment opportunities, greater pay, heightened benefits, increased paid sick days and extending the \$3 temporary wage increase for workers in both long term care and institutional settings past the March 31st, 2021 expiration date;
 - c. develop and release clear, multilingual vaccination roll-out plans for older adults, and their caregivers, living at home and address vaccine hesitancy amongst older adults and caregivers;
 - d. reverse the exemption provided to long term care homes and congregate care settings from civil proceedings by amending the Supporting Ontario's Recovery Act, 2020;
 - e. reform the governance and accountability models of for-profit long term care homes so that profits can never come before care and safety; and
 - f. explore new, and expand current, at-home supports and care to allow for more older adults to age in place.
2. City Council request the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to provide additional resources to long-term care homes and congregate care settings to collect data on non-COVID-19 deaths, and the impact COVID-19 has had on the functional and psycho-social status and

care needs of all residents

Summary

This public health emergency has quickly turned into a humanitarian crisis with seniors in long term care accounting for nearly 70 percent of Ontario's COVID-19 deaths. To save lives and better support our long term care workers, residents, caregivers, older adults and those living with accessibility challenges, our provincial government must accept, and act on, expert advice immediately.

Like in the pandemic's first wave, far too many of Ontario's long term care homes continue to face dangerous staffing shortages. This is a serious and significant contributing factor to the increase in recorded COVID-19 outbreaks and deaths that are ravaging the very places that should be safe, healthy, and caring environments.

The majority of workers in both long term care homes and congregate care settings, such as retirement homes and group homes, are part-time, rather than full-time staff. The key difference between the two includes the number of paid sick days. A full-time unionized worker will receive 10-14 days of paid sick leave every year, while a part-time worker will only receive 1-3 days. This is why many workers have had to make the difficult choice of reporting to work with potential COVID-19 symptoms or staying home and missing a day without pay.

Our Province needs to invest in our workforce through offering more full-time employment opportunities, greater pay, heightened benefits and increased paid sick days. This would ultimately resolve the recruitment and retainment issues that have been present in the sector, even prior to the pandemic. In addition, our province must extend the \$3 temporary wage increase for workers in both long term care and congregate care settings past the March 31, 2021 expiration date.

To stop and slow the spread of infection, Ontario must accelerate distributing the full dosage of available vaccines around the clock to all residents, caregivers and workers in long term care homes and congregate care settings.

Moreover, Ontario must effectively address vaccine hesitancy in workers in long term care homes and congregate care settings. Many racialized and Indigenous populations have historic mistrusts of vaccines and health programs. That is why Ontario must make every effort to work collaboratively with key partners that have built strong relationships with such communities. This will ensure that they are receiving clear information about the vaccine from a trusted source and are able to access it conveniently, such as within their workplace. For those workers that must visit vaccination clinics to receive the vaccine, the province should offer them paid time off and/or reimbursement for travel expenses.

As we continue to vaccinate all residents, staff, and caregivers in long term care and congregate care settings, Ontario must develop and release clear, multilingual vaccination roll-out plans for older adults, and caregivers, living at home and address vaccine hesitancy amongst older adults and caregivers using similar strategies aforementioned.

In an effort to ensure that families and loved ones seeking justice against negligent long term care and congregate care settings, Ontario should reverse the exemption provided to long term care homes and congregate care settings in the Supporting Ontario's Recovery Act, 2020, which states that any business, agency, non-profit or person that has made or makes an honest effort from March 17, 2020 to follow public health guidelines, would not be held liable for harms

related to the exposure of COVID-19 in civil proceedings. The lack of accountability and responsibility outlined in this Bill demonstrates the apathy, instead of empathy our province has for the thousands of lives lost, especially in our long term care homes.

As noted by experts tracking Ontario's cases and death rates in long term care, for-profit homes have significantly worse COVID-19 outcomes when compared to municipal and non-profit facilities. The contributing factors that have resulted in for-profit homes doing far worse include, but not limited to, older design standards, lack of investment in the workforce and prioritization of shareholders over delivery of care. That is why, Ontario must reform the governance and accountability models of for-profit long term care homes so that profits can never come before care and safety.

While the systemic challenges present in Ontario's long term care system have been entrenched for decades, this pandemic has further discouraged many older adults from wanting to enter the system in the first place. According to a recent poll, over 90 percent of older adults plan to age in place. With seniors being the fastest growing age group in Ontario, our province needs to begin exploring new, and expanding current, at-home supports and care to allow for more older adults to age in place.

Lastly, as reported by experts, residents in long term care and congregate care settings have experienced severe and potentially irreversible physical, cognitive, psychological, and functional declines as a result of the health and safety measures imposed on homes. An increase in the prescription and administration of antipsychotic drugs to residents has also been reported. In order to better understand and assess the needs and challenges of residents, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care must provide additional resources to long term care homes and congregate care settings to collect data on non-COVID-19 deaths, and the impact COVID-19 has had on the functional and psychosocial status of all residents. This data will not only inform the current and future standards of care, but may also encourage the province to implement emotion-centered approaches to care within homes, as this has proven to benefit residents through reductions in unintended weight loss, falls, negative responsive behaviors, the use of anti-psychotics and cost-savings to our healthcare system.

We owe it to our long term care homes staff and residents, along with their families and friends, to take the necessary steps to ensure that they're provided the highest standards of safety and care. It is simply unacceptable for the provincial government to do anything less than to implement these recommendations immediately in order to save lives.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM28.14