

**Ministry of
Long-Term Care**

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May 9, 2024

Dr. Catherine Zahn
Board Chair
Ontario Health
525 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto ON M5J 2L3

Dear Dr. Zahn:

Thank you for your leadership in your capacity as Board Chair of Ontario Health.

Further to the 2024-25 Letter of Direction you received from the Minister of Health, this letter sets out the Ministry of Long-Term Care's strategic priorities for Ontario Health related to long-term care for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The direction outlined in this letter is consistent with our government priorities, your agency mandate, key policies, and directives. This letter is part of the broader accountability framework for Ontario Health that includes an Accountability Agreement with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, which sets out Ontario Health's operational and performance obligations and expectations with respect to long-term care.

Our government continues to prioritize and address the long-standing and systemic issues facing long-term care in Ontario. We have a plan so that every resident can experience the best possible quality of life, supported by safe, high-quality care. In alignment with the government's *Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care* (released January 2023), what this means for Ontarians is a long-term care system that:

- Focuses on increasing staffing and care, operations, and quality improvement to support and sustain homes, and building and re-developing homes to create needed capacity.
- Fosters a culture of continuous quality improvement within long-term care homes with the overarching goal of supporting positive person-centred outcomes.
- Has a clearly defined and active role within a transforming health care system, and the broader care continuum.
- Has a clearly defined and active role in building a stronger, more resilient health system, including better connecting seniors to the right care in the right place.

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Work is already underway to realize our vision by jointly operationalizing the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* and our collective actions to support health system pandemic recovery and sustainability. Through our continued work together on enhanced transparency and accountability, we will address the recommendations noted in Ontario Auditor General of Ontario's report released in December 2023, and ensure that long-term care residents get the quality of care they need and deserve, while maintaining the best possible quality of life.

Under your leadership and that of your Board and senior executive team, Ontario Health has made significant contributions to Ontario's long-term care sector, including:

- Playing a critical role in supporting Ontario's COVID-19 pandemic response and emergency preparedness for the long-term care sector (e.g., surveillance testing, infection prevention and control, outbreak response).
- Being a key partner in local and system planning to stabilize the sector and collaborating on initiatives to support transitions to long-term care and prevent hospitalization.
- Supporting the launch of new initiatives to improve access to more in-home diagnostics for long-term care residents in Fall 2023

As Ontario Health fulfills its broad mandate to manage health system performance, coordination, and oversight in 2024-25, I expect Ontario Health to actively engage and integrate the long-term care sector in local and system planning. Included in the priorities below is an emphasis on collaboration across key partners that will be supported through a renewed governance structure and process improvements that support better coordination and alignment of cross-ministry work.

For the 2024-25 fiscal year, I would like Ontario Health to focus on supporting the Ministry of Long-Term Care's strategic direction for long-term care, including the following priorities:

Enable Individuals to Receive the Right Care in the Right Place

1. Supporting and improving transitions of Alternate Level of Care patients to long-term care, where appropriate.
2. Identifying and implementing strategies and initiatives to support long-term care applicants and other seniors in the community by working collaboratively with key system partners.
3. Continuing to support more convenient and timely access to appropriate diagnostics for residents of long-term care homes, including building clinical capacity within homes, to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations.
4. Continuing to support the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program and working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Health to identify options for improving community paramedicine programming.

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Engage in Collaborative System Planning and Integration of Care

5. Assessing and evolving data and information sharing processes to support local and system level planning and policy development, including, but not limited to, data to identify and address local, regional and health system inequities in long-term care, working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, Ministry of Health, and Home and Community Care Support Services / Ontario Health atHome and other relevant ministries as required.
6. Supporting the integration of long-term care homes into the broader continuum of care, including actively engaging the Ministry of Long-Term Care and long-term care homes as key partners in the development and implementation of Ontario Health Teams.
7. Supporting the transition of long-term care placement functions from Home and Community Care Support Services to Ontario Health atHome and then further evolving to a future state model, working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, Ministry of Health, and Home and Community Care Support Services / Ontario Health atHome.
8. Working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, to better support and serve individuals living with dementia, their caregivers, and families.

Strengthen Targeted Support to Long-Term Care Homes

9. Proactively identifying and prioritizing support to long-term care homes at risk of financial, staffing or other operational challenges, and engaging the Ministry of Long-Term Care as appropriate, as part of improved performance management of long-term care homes.
10. Continuing to support the planning, development and implementation of long-term care homes' emergency plans and the development of Infection Prevention and Control capacity in collaboration with the Ministry of Long-Term Care and other local-level partners.

Support Implementation of Staffing and Health Human Resources Initiatives

11. Continuing to collaborate on health human resources planning and initiatives, including by:
 - i. Meeting regularly with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to provide analysis and insights informed by the quarterly Long-Term Care Staffing Survey data, and
 - ii. Ongoing delivery of programs to support recruitment and retention of health human resources.

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Address Capacity Needs Through Capital (Re) Development or Licensing

12. Continuing to work with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to identify regional capacity needs that could be addressed through capital (re)development or licensing. In addition, continue to support the long-term care licensing program, including providing input and advice as required.

Support Quality Improvement in Long-Term Care

13. Continuing to work with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to support quality improvement in long-term care, including:

- i. Advising on, facilitating, and supporting additional initiatives that support improved resident quality of care and quality of life, including Models of Care, as requested.
- ii. Advising on equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives to identify and address health inequities and improve the resident and family/caregiver experience with long-term care, as requested.

Expand Palliative Approaches in Long-Term Care

14. Continuing to work to expand palliative approaches to care in long-term care in a manner that is responsive to the diverse needs of long-term care residents and aligned with Ontario's Provincial Framework for Palliative Care and the requirements set out in the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* and its regulation.

Ontario Health's plan to address these priorities must be outlined in the agency's Annual Business Plan to be submitted to the Minister of Health, and cover the period from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2027.

In addition, as part of its dealings with the long-term care sector, Ontario Health is expected to operate within the budget allocation set by the Minister of Long-Term Care, adhere to reporting requirements, and demonstrate openness and transparency by publicly posting governance documents and information related to expenses on its website.

Together, we will continue to improve long-term care as a key part of an integrated and stable health care system that will improve the resident and sector experience; provide better, more connected care in the right place; and achieve greater value for the people of Ontario.

Dr. Catherine Zahn

Thank you for your service to date. I look forward to continuing to work with you, Ontario Health's board members, and Ontario Health staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan Cho". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stan" and last name "Cho" clearly legible.

Hon. Stan Cho
Minister of Long-Term Care

- c: Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Melissa Thomson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care and Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Matthew Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Health
Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Kelly McAslan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations, Ministry of Long-Term Care
Gillian Steeve, Assistant Deputy Minister, System Planning and Partnerships, Ministry of Long-Term Care
Sean Court, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Policy, Ministry of Long-Term Care
James Stewart, Interim Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Capital Development, Ministry of Long-Term care
Rhonda McMichael, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Partnerships, Ministry of Health