



**Presentation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy
By Sue VanderBent
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Delivered April 1, 2019

**Check Against Delivery*

Good Morning.

My name is Sue VanderBent, and I am the CEO of Home Care Ontario, *the voice of home care in Ontario*.

Home care has become a cornerstone of the province's health care system. Last year alone, more than 750,000 people received more than 39 million hours of publicly-funded home care in Ontario, and an estimated 150,000 people purchased an additional 20 million hours of care directly.

On behalf of my members, who provide this critical care across the province, I am pleased to be here to speak in support of Bill 74, the *People's Health Care Act*.

Simply put, the current health care system is not working.

It is fragmented, and it is siloed. This has left our hospitals vulnerable and operating at above full capacity for years now.

We have all seen what this means.

Patients are being treated in hallways, common spaces, and even closets.

Sadly, hallway health care is no longer just a scary headline, it is a nightmare that more and more families are living through.

To make matters worse, many of the 1,200 people waiting for care in hallways are there because someone who no longer needs a hospital bed is stuck in a ward waiting to be transitioned to home care or another care setting.

These patients don't want to be in the hospital anymore, but they are unable to get the adequate care they need to be able to go home safely.

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Meanwhile, when patients do make it back to their homes, prescriptive rules imposed by the LHINs have resulted in less patient care.

This includes prescribing shorter and shorter home care visits, rationing care, growing wait lists, and maintaining a confusing system for caregivers and patients to try to navigate.

With these issues in mind, for the past year Home Care Ontario has been working with the Ontario Hospital Association and the Ontario Community Support Association to explore ways to break down silos and begin to streamline care delivery.

You see, in pockets around Ontario, great work is being done.

We are seeing fantastic examples where home-care providers are cutting down wait times and admissions through improved data sharing and the use of virtual care and remote monitoring.

Others are providing services at home once only available in hospital, such as respiratory therapy.

While these advances have existed in isolated areas, it is time that we embrace these innovative approaches across the province.

Bill 74 will help build an innovative and integrated system around the patient. It will transform our health care system by focusing on outcomes, fostering collaboration, embracing technology, and integrating care so the patient experience is a seamless and positive one.

As a result of these changes home care will be able to work more closely with hospitals, primary care, mental health and other care partners and to do more to help people stay in their home.

We believe the reforms contained in this legislation will create the conditions for an improved home care system.

Specifically, we hope the new system will allow for more efficient discharge planning, scheduling and care delivery.

We hope the new system will end 15-minute visits, rationing of care, and wait-listing for home care services.

We hope it will address the ongoing health human resource challenges.

However, if the legislation is passed and these reforms are implemented, the continuity of care for patients and families will be critical.

Therefore, Home Care Ontario recommends that for the stability of the patients we serve, and as the system is transforming into its final end state, current approved health service providers should maintain responsibility for volumes of care under current contracts.

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Ontario Health Teams, especially the early adopters, should partner with these approved providers to improve care pathways and the patient experience. This will enable continuity of care for patients and families, while allowing for the operational changes necessary to eliminate the reliance on LHINs, as the government proceeds with an orderly transformative process of change.

Additionally, Home Care Ontario recommends that Ontario Health establish a provincial-wide transition planning protocol that will facilitate frontline home care providers working directly with hospitals and other care partners to ensure smooth transitions and improved patient outcomes.

Finally, we recommend the new system embrace new medical devices, models of care, and system-wide innovations in remote patient monitoring, virtual wards, remote care delivery, patient reported data and self-management that would allow more care to be delivered at home.

We must seize this moment and embrace new ideas and innovative solutions because patients deserve a new approach.

Patients want to stay in their own home as they age, receiving care there if necessary, and live independently and with dignity.

Caring for more patients in their homes, where they want it, not only provides a high-quality patient experience, but it is essential to ending hallway health care.

The health-care system is complex, and change will take time, but the status quo is no longer acceptable.

We applaud Bill 74 as it will usher in a new era in our health care system that empowers patients and unites frontline care providers across the continuum of care and delivers more care at home.

By doing so, we have the opportunity to finally get patients out of the hallways and back into their homes — where they actually want to be — once and for all.

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