



SECTION 2: SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF YOUR RESIDENTS' COUNCIL

For Residents, By Residents

SECTION 2

Inside you will find...

Introduction

- 2.1 What Is a Residents' Council?
- 2.2 Functions and Powers of a Residents' Council
- 2.3 Legislation and Residents' Councils
- 2.4 Cultivating Rich, Collaborative Partnerships
- 2.5 Three Classic Models for Your Residents' Council Structure
- 2.6 Staff Assistant's Learning Needs Self-Assessment
- 2.7 Qualities of an Effective Residents' Council
- 2.8 Establishing Your Residents' Council
- 2.9 Establishing Your Residents' Council's Leadership Team
- 2.10 Developing Your Residents' Council Bylaws
- 2.11 ADDENDUM: Insert Home-Specific or Official Council Documents

Introduction

Section 2 will help you to better understand the role of a Residents' Council in your home, how the laws contained within the Fixing Long-Term Care Act (FLTCA 2021) empower residents, and the value of mutually supportive partnerships. This section will also give you ideas to consider when looking at establishing and strengthening your Council.



We will start by:

- Defining what a Residents' Council is and what it is meant to be. We recommend that Councils be individualized to reflect the specific needs of the residents they serve.
- Examining the essential functions and powers of a Residents' Council.
- Highlighting legal requirements under the FLTCA, which are relevant to your Residents' Council.
- Describing the qualities found in an effective Council.
- Describing the three basic structures used by many Councils.
- Thinking about the necessary collaborative partnerships to help you nurture a culture of positive, mutual support within your home and during your Residents' Council meetings.
- Exploring the process of starting or renewing your Residents' Council and encouraging other residents to get involved in their Council.
- Exploring the roles taken on by various people on, and connected to, the Council.
- Examining the importance of creating and maintaining a set of Residents' Council Bylaws to govern Council activities.
- Defining the role and responsibilities of a Residents' Council assistant to the Residents' Council.
- Encouraging Residents' Council Assistants to assess their learning needs to better support the Residents' Council.

We have included helpful tools, sample documents and templates for use in your home. This guide is also available on the OARC website at: www.ontarc.com. Consider adding your home-specific documents relating to the topics mentioned in the above list at the end of this section.

2.1 What Is a Residents' Council?

Your Residents' Council is a formal advisory body, independent of the home and other Councils. Residents' Council meetings are regularly scheduled to ensure continuity and enhance resident attendance. Council meetings provide the opportunity for residents to participate actively in matters that affect their daily lives and where they can exercise decision-making autonomy. Councils attempt to cultivate a safe environment that encourages unity, partnership and mutual support, to contribute to increased quality of living for all residents in the home.

All residents living in a home are members of their Residents' Council and are encouraged to attend meetings, get involved in Council activities, vote in elections, and volunteer to serve on their Residents' Council leadership team.

The Council provides residents with wonderful opportunities to use their talents and wisdom to enrich their experiences. Council members regularly meet to talk about their needs, preferences and concerns. They advocate for protecting residents' rights and for shared concerns to be resolved. They support and inspire each other, contribute to improving services and policies in order to create a person-centred community within the home, and plan various fun things to do which residents find enjoyable.



A Council meeting should not be considered a social gathering or part of a therapeutic activity.

Across Ontario, Residents' Councils are flourishing thanks to the generous contributions of residents and team members. To truly represent its membership, Councils are not expected to be identical even though all Residents' Councils have the same legislative powers under the FLTCA. Each Council is encouraged to reflect the unique needs and values of its residents. A Residents' Council in any format is always valuable regardless of how it is structured, its size, the formality of its activities, or the perceived pace by which it



Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that a Residents' Council is established in the home. [2021, c. 39, s. 62 (1)]

Only residents of the long-term care home may be members of the Residents' Council. [2021, c. 39, s. 62 (2)]

operates. If the intention of your Council is being carried out, then your group is an official Residents' Council.

Why Are Residents' Councils Mandatory in every Ontario Long-Term Care Home?

Our government recognizes the value and influence of your Residents' Council in sustaining a mutually supportive community where residents have a stronger collective voice and a reciprocal cooperative relationship with their home's management team. These legal requirements serve as an added protective measure to ensure your home's management team continues to be accountable for nurturing a positive living space designed around your needs, choices and preferences, so that all residents may equally enjoy a quality of living that is meaningful to them.



While the FLTCA does not specify the frequency with which meetings are to be held, the intent is that residents come together regularly as a Council. OARC recommends that Residents' Councils meet monthly to provide the foundation for ongoing, open communication among members of the Council and with management.

If too much time passes between meetings, tracking successes and challenges in the home will be difficult. Relationships between residents and management thrive best when communication is open, transparent and frequent.

What Are the Benefits of a Residents' Council?

The involvement of a Residents' Council in influencing change in your home's community, strengthening relationships, and honouring residents' voices is multidimensional. As an effective vehicle for transforming lives, Councils offer residents the opportunity to shape their home's culture and positively contribute to creating a place of mutual support with fellow residents and with staff.



Residents' Councils help to...

- Improve communication within your home. Councils can help residents stay informed by sharing factual information and helping dispel rumors.

Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council



- Promote fellowship. Through regularly scheduled meetings and by working together for the common good, residents have a chance to get to know one another better, appreciate each other's individual qualities, and nurture meaningful relationships within their home.
- Identify actual or potential issues early on when it is easier to address them.
- Empower residents to feel comfortable, while participating in the daily decision-making process of their home.
- Maintain and strengthen resident ties with their external community.
- Provide a comfortable atmosphere to work through new challenges and explore opportunities for personal growth. For example, residents who might not have participated in activities or projects before may choose to get more involved in Council activities by volunteering to serve in a leadership position for the first time, or on a subcommittee, or by working behind the scenes to support their Council.
- Serve as a safe sounding board where residents can raise concerns, share ideas and express their opinions.
- Encourage members to work cooperatively as a team.
- Advocate for residents through a unified voice.
- Offer a unique perspective of the home's operation, seen through the eyes of the people who are using the services provided.
- Bring forward suggestions on how to address issues and improve their home's services, policies and activities.

2.2 Functions and Powers of a Residents' Council

Experience has taught us that quality of living is deeply rooted in a supportive community and cemented by meaningful human connections that respect each of us as individuals. Councils are an opportunity to provide a safe and mutually supportive community for all residents, as only residents are members. Residents are encouraged to express themselves and share their experiences with each other, while shaping and contributing to the spirit of their home. Your Council may focus on whatever members choose to undertake, whether it be specific short-term projects or areas for improvement within the home.

How Your Council Can Support Quality of Living in Your Home

Although Councils may focus on different things, which largely depend on the interests and goals of its members, they tend to share a common purpose. In general, a Residents' Council's function is to:

- Create an environment where residents feel safe expressing their concerns and experiences.
- Build a sense of community and friendship among residents in which personal connections and the understanding of one's unique position as a resident can flourish.
- Promote an atmosphere which honours the spirit and rhythm of each resident's life.
- Foster a respectful culture of mutual support among residents and with the home's management and team members, where working together collaboratively forms the very fabric of your home.
- Promote an atmosphere that maximises each resident's special skills and potential.
- Encourage all residents to be active decision-makers in their own lives and to let others know what has meaning and importance to them.
- Create an environment where residents feel safe expressing their concerns and experiences.
- Safeguard the rights of all residents and advocate for their concerns.
- Gather news and information from team members on issues that impact residents or may be of interest to all, to ensure that all residents are informed of, and involved in, changes that may affect them.



- Discuss concerns and generate solutions to problems in the home.
- Work with the home's management team to collaboratively make decisions that enrich the services offered to residents, the practices of the home and its surroundings.
- Address special interests (e.g., food/dietary subcommittee) and work on projects identified by residents.

Powers of All Residents' Councils

The provincial government has awarded specific powers to your Residents' Council, to recognize the need for mutual support through each home's Council. The legislation requires homes to assist their Councils in exercising these powers without any restrictions or interference.

As described in the FLTCA, your Residents' Council has the power to...

-
- Advise residents of their rights and obligations under the FLTCA.
 - Advise residents of the rights and obligations of the home.
 - Attempt to resolve disagreements between residents and the home's management team.
 - Sponsor and plan fun social activities for residents.
 - Work in partnership with external community groups and volunteers on resident activities.
 - Advise the home of any concerns and recommendations related to how it operates.
 - Provide advice and recommendations to the home, based on residents' suggestions for improving care or their quality of life.
 - Report directly to the MOHLTC resident concerns and recommendations.
 - Review the detailed allocation of funding provided by the MOHLTC and local health integration networks (LHINs) and the amounts paid by residents to the home.



- Examine the operations of the home, which includes reviewing financial statements and inspection reports/summaries.
- Review the results of satisfaction surveys and make recommendations to the home's management team, so that results are acted on.
- Review scheduled times for meals and snacks and select alternate items for the menu.
- Provide advice on how your home's satisfaction survey is developed, how it is to be administered, and how the results of the survey could be implemented. In reviewing the results of satisfaction surveys, the Council can recommend to the home's management team, any changes that would be beneficial to the general population.

See pages 31-48 for a full account of specific rights, roles and responsibilities under the FLTCA.

2.3 Legislation and Residents' Councils

Long-term care in Ontario is governed by the FLTCA and the associated Regulations 245/22. The Regulations provide details which support the act.

Current legislation recognizes that a LTC home is a resident's primary home and requires all homes to operate in a manner which respectfully preserves each resident's individuality, independence and dignity within a secure, safe and comfortable atmosphere, while supporting their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs.



The legislation is focused on building a culture of resident-centred care and on helping residents live their lives to the fullest extent possible. In recognition of the importance of Residents' Councils in promoting better quality of living for residents, the government has changed the legal status of Residents' Councils. As of July 1, 2010, Ontario requires every LTC home to have an established Residents' Council. Moreover, all residents are considered members of their home's

Residents' Council by virtue of being a resident living in that home.

Councils are expected to have opportunities to be consulted and have greater involvement in their home's activities and decision-making processes. This enables residents to significantly influence the quality of services they receive, the way they are treated while living there, and the different ways they can get involved in how their home operates.

What Do the Numbers Mean at the Beginning of a Legislative Requirement in the Act and Regulations?

Written law is composed of numbered sections, cited as sections 1, 2, 3, etc. Many sections are further divided into two or more subsections, cited as subsections (1), (2), (3), etc. Some sections and subsections also contain clauses (cited as clauses (a), (b), (c), etc.), subclauses (cited as subclauses (i), (ii), (iii), etc.), paragraphs (cited as paragraphs 1, 2, 3, etc.) and subparagraphs (cited as subparagraphs i, ii, iii, etc.). Further levels of divisions are possible, although they are rare.

Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021, & Ontario Regulation 245/22

The FLTCA is rooted in the philosophy of resident-centred care. The act strongly supports collaboration and mutual respect among residents, their families, home management, team members and volunteers, to ensure that the care and services provided will meet the needs of residents and enable them to live their lives to the fullest extent possible.

This part of the guide addresses specific clauses within the FLTCA outlining the rights, roles and responsibilities of residents as members of Residents' Councils. OARC has provided brief explanations in [blue text](#) to assist you in understanding these critical aspects of the law. You are also encouraged to insert your home's relevant documents pertaining to this section. See the suggested list on page 37.

Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021

Residents' Bill of Rights

3. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that the following rights of residents are fully respected and promoted:



[The owner and/or administrator of every long-term care home must ensure that everyone working and volunteering in the home knows, respects and promotes the Residents' Bill of Rights.](#)

29. Every resident has the right to raise concerns or recommend changes in policies and services on behalf of himself or herself or others to the following persons and organizations without interference and without fear of coercion, discrimination or reprisal, whether directed at the resident or anyone else,

- i. the Residents' Council,

[As a resident, you have the right to raise concerns or recommend changes to policies and services, on behalf of yourself or any other resident. Your comments can be confidently raised and discussed at Residents' Council meetings, and you can do so:](#)

- [without any interaction or involvement from any manager, team member, volunteer or resident.](#)

- free from fear of anyone using their power or intimidating behaviour towards you, or anyone else, in trying to prevent you from speaking up.
- free from fear of discrimination from anyone because you spoke up.



This applies to all residents in your long-term care home.

28. Every resident has the right to participate in the Residents' Council. 2021, c. 39, s. 3 (1).

Mission statement

4. (1) Every licensee shall ensure that,

- (a) there is a mission statement for each of the licensee's long-term care homes that sets out the principles, purpose and philosophy of care of the home: and

Every long-term care home has a mission statement that states the purpose, the principles and philosophy of care of the home. Residents' Council members should be aware of this statement and understand the home's goals. the principles, purpose and philosophy of care set out in the mission statement are driven by the primary goal of providing quality care that is resident-directed and safe.

- (c) the principles, purpose and philosophy of care set out in the mission statement are put into practice in the day-to-day operation of the long-term care home. 2021, c. 39, s. 4 (1).

Homes are responsible for putting their stated purpose, principles and philosophy of care into practice.

Collaboration

(3) The licensee shall ensure that the mission statement is developed, and revised as necessary, in collaboration with the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any, and shall invite the staff of the long-term care home and volunteers to participate. 2021, c. 39, s. 4 (3).

The administration in the home is responsible for working together with the Residents' Council, Family Council and any team members or volunteers who

wish to participate in the development or revision of the home's mission statement.

Updating

(4) At least once every five years after a mission statement is developed, the licensee shall consult with the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any, as to whether revisions are required, and shall invite the staff of the long-term care home and volunteers to participate. 2021, c.39, s. 4 (4).



Every five years, the administration of your long-term care home is responsible for re-examining the current mission statement to determine if revisions are needed. In doing so, the administration must engage in discussion with, and seek the advice of the Residents' Council and Family Council, as well as any team members, volunteers or other stakeholders who wish to contribute. The administration is also responsible for extending an invitation to these people to participate in this collaborative process.

PART IV: COUNCILS

Residents' Council

(Sections 62-64 are displayed chronologically in the FLTCA under PART V, COUNCILS.)

62. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that a Residents' Council is established in the home. 2021, c. 39, s. 62 (1).

Only residents

(2) Only residents of the long-term care home may be members of the Residents' Council. 2021, c. 39, s. 62 (2).

Licensee duty to meet with Council

69. If invited by the Residents' Council or the Family Council, the licensee shall meet with that Council or, if the licensee is a corporation, ensure that representatives of the licensee meet with that Council. 2021, c. 39, s. 69.

Attendance at meetings – licensees, staff, etc.

69. A licensee of a long-term care home shall attend a meeting of the Residents' Council or the Family Council only if invited, and shall ensure that the staff, including the Administrator, and other persons involved in the management or operation of the home attend a meeting of either Council only if invited. 2021, c. 39, s. 69.



- The licensee, usually through their designate (the home's Administrator), must ensure that they, or any other manager/team member, do **not** attend a Residents' Council meeting unless invited. Residents' Council meetings are for **residents only**. Any other person must not attend the Council meeting unless invited. This is to ensure residents can meet privately to discuss any of their experiences as a resident, in a safe, secure environment among their peers.
- All Council members need to be in agreement with a guest being invited to a meeting. Guests may be invited to attend a meeting for a specific purpose and then asked to leave while the Council continues their business, or guests may be invited to attend a meeting for a specific purpose and then permitted to stay for the duration of the meeting. Council members make this decision **prior** to extending the invitation.

Powers of Residents' Council

63. (1) A Residents' Council of a long-term care home has the power to do the following:

1. Advise residents respecting their rights and obligations under this Act.

Council members/residents have the right to ask for and understand their rights and obligations under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*.

2. Advise residents respecting the rights and obligations of the licensee under this Act and under any agreement relating to the home.

Council members/residents have the right to ask for and understand the rights and obligations of the licensee/owner under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, and any other agreement relating to the home, such as the agreement the home has with their local health integration network.

3. Attempt to resolve disputes between the licensee and residents.

Council members have the right to use their collective voice to attempt to resolve an issue between the home administration and a resident or residents.



4. Sponsor and plan activities for residents.

Council members have the right to plan activities for residents and, if there is a cost involved, Council will use its Residents' Council funds to pay for the activity.

5. Collaborate with community groups and volunteers concerning activities for residents.

Council members have the right to work together with community groups and volunteers on activities of interest to residents and make their own arrangements.

6. Advise the licensee of any concerns or recommendations the Council has about the operation of the homes.

Council has the right to advise the owner/administrator of any concerns or recommendations they have about the operation of their home.

7. Provide advice and recommendations to the licensee regarding what the residents would like to see done to improve care or the quality of life in the home.

Council has the right to provide advice or recommendations to the owner/administrator regarding what the residents would like to see done to improve care or the quality of life in their home.

8. Report to the Director any concerns and recommendations that in the Council's opinion ought to be brought to the Director's attention.

Council has the right to report directly to the Director of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Performance Compliance and Improvement

Branch any concerns and recommendations that the Council believes should be brought to the Director's attention.

9. Review,

- i. inspection reports and summaries received under sections 152,



A copy of all inspection reports issued by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Performance Compliance and Improvement Branch that concern your home is sent directly to the President of the Residents' Council. These reports are intended to be shared at Residents' Council meetings.

- ii. a written plan for achieving compliance, prepared by the licensee, that the Director has ordered in accordance with clause 155 (1) (b) following a referral under paragraph 4 of subsection 154 (1).
- iii. the detailed allocation, by the licensee, of funding under this Act, the *Local Health System Integration Act, 2006* and the *Connecting Care Act, 2019* and amounts paid by residents,
- iv. the financial statements relating to the home filed with the Director under the regulations or provided to a local health integration network or to the Agency, and,
- v. the operation of the home.

The Residents' Council has the right to review any of the above reports or statements whenever requested. OARC suggests that Councils extend an invitation to the home Administrator to attend a Council meeting for the purpose of having an open discussion about each document on an annual basis.

- 10. Exercise any other powers provided for in the regulations. 2021, c. 39, ss. 63 (1), 10.

Detailed allocation

211. For the purpose of subparagraph 9 iii of subsection 63 (1) and subparagraph 7 iii of subsections 66 (1) of the Act, “detailed allocation” means the reconciliation report for a calendar year submitted to the Minister and to the Home and Community Care Support Services and the auditor’s report on that reconciliation report.

Council has the right to review the Annual Reconciliation Report submitted to the Minister and to the home’s local health and community care services network along with the associated auditor’s report. OARC suggests that this take place at the spring/June meeting, as the calendar year for homes to report is March 31st.



Duty to respond

(3) If the Residents’ Council has advised the licensee of concerns or recommendations under either paragraph 6 or 8 of subsection (1), the licensee shall, within 10 days of receiving the advice, respond to the Residents’ Council in writing. 2021, c. 39, s. 63 (3).

***See Regulation Section Reporting and Complaints

Residents’ Council Assistant

64. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall appoint a Residents’ Council assistant who is acceptable to that Council to assist the Residents’ Council. 2021, c. 39, s. 64 (1).

Residents’ Councils have the right to receive help and support from a team member who is **acceptable** to the Council members. Securing this person, who serves as an assistant to the Residents’ Council, should be a negotiated process with the home Administrator. It is not appropriate for the Administrator to assign this responsibility to a team member without having first discussed this with the Residents’ Council’s leadership team.

Duties

(2) In carrying out his or her duties, a Residents’ Council assistant shall take instructions from the Residents’ Council, ensure confidentiality where requested and report to the Residents’ Council. 2021, c. 39, s. 64 (2).

The Residents' Council assistant has a pivotal role in most Council operations. The assistant is effectively working for the Council while in this role, not the long-term care home. This person is not a member of the Council and they are not part of the Council. If it is determined that assistance is required, an acceptable person is secured through negotiations with the Administrator. Duties may include, but are not limited to, assisting with agenda preparation, organizing the meeting space, recording minutes, facilitating discussion, and assisting with elections.

Licensee to co-operate with and assist Councils

68. A licensee shall co-operate with the Residents' Council, the Family Council, the Residents' Council assistant, and the Family Council assistant and shall provide them with such financial and other information and such assistance as is provided for in the regulations. 2021, c. 39, s. 68.



No interference by licensee

70. A licensee of a long-term care home,
- (a) shall not interfere with the meetings or operation of the Residents' Council of the Family Council;
 - (b) shall not prevent a member of the Residents' Council or Family Council from entering the long-term care home to attend a meeting of the Council or to perform any functions as a member of the Council and shall not otherwise hinder, obstruct or interfere with such a member carrying out those functions;
 - (c) shall not prevent a Residents' Council assistant or a Family Council assistant from entering the long-term care home to carry out his or her duties or otherwise hinder, obstruct or interfere with such an assistant carrying out those duties;
 - (d) shall ensure that no staff member, including the Administrator or other person involved in the management or operation of the home, does anything that the licensee is forbidden to do under clauses (a) to (c). 2021, c. 39, s. 70.

Immunity – Council members, assistants

72. No action or other proceeding shall be commenced against a member of a Residents' Council or Family Council or a Residents' Council assistant or Family Council assistant for anything done or omitted to be done in good faith in the capacity as a member or an assistant. 2021, c. 39, s. 72.

This clause relates to an action or proceedings against an individual, not the long-term care home (licensee). There will be no action or other proceedings (legal action, for example) against a member of either the Residents' Council or Family Council, nor their respective assistant. If that person, in their capacity as member or assistant, works in good faith in the conduct of his or her duties, no proceeding or action can be taken against that person.

Duty of licensee to consult Councils

73. A licensee has a duty to consult regularly with the Residents' Council, and with the Family Council, if any, and in any case shall consult with them at least every three months. 2021, c. 39, s. 73.



OARC believes that the intent here is to promote regular communication and develop a mutually respectful working relationship between Residents' Council members and the administration. Meeting every three months provides the administration with an opportunity to update the Council on the home's quality improvement work, along with any other items of mutual interest.

Regulations

74 (1). The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations for carrying out the purposes and provisions of this Part. 2021, c. 39, s. 74 (1).

Specific inclusions

(2) Without restricting the generality of subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

(a) requiring a licensee to assist in the formation of Residents' Councils and Family Councils, and governing the assistance that the licensee is required to provide those Councils. 2021, c. 39, s. 74 (2).

(b) respecting and governing the duties of Residents' Councils and Family Councils;

- (c) defining “detailed allocation” for the purpose of subparagraph 9 iii of subsection 63 (1) and subparagraph 7 iii of subsection 66 (1);
- (d) providing for anything that under this Part may or must be provided for in regulations, or that is to be done in compliance with or in accordance with the regulations.

Information for residents, etc.

84. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that,

- (a) a package of information that complies with this section is given to every resident and to the substitute decision-maker of the resident, if any, at the time that the resident is admitted;
- (b) the package of information is made available to family members of residents and persons of importance to residents;
- (c) the package of information is revised as necessary;
- (d) any material revisions to the package of information are provided to any person who has received the original package and who is still a resident or substitute decision-maker of a resident; and
- (e) the contents of the package and of the revisions are explained to the person receiving them. 2021, c. 39, s. 84 (1)



Contents

(2) The package of information shall include, at a minimum,

- (o) information about the Residents' Council, including any information that may be provided by the Residents' Council for inclusion in the package. 2021, c. 39, ss. 84 (2),

Councils have the right to provide information about their home's Residents' Council, so that it can be included in the information package for new residents and their families. For example, the Residents' Council may wish to include a brochure or information sheet.

Posting of information

84. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that the required information is posted in the home, in a conspicuous and easily accessible location in a manner that complies with the requirements, if any, established by the regulations. 2021, c. 39, s. 85 (1).

Communication

(2) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that the required information is communicated, in a manner that complies with any requirements that may be provided for in the regulations, to residents who cannot read the information. 2021, c. 39, s. 85 (2).

OARC views Council meetings as an opportunity to share required information with residents who are unable to read the information.



Required information

(3) The required information for the purposes of subsections (1) and (2) is,

(p) the most recent minutes of the Residents' Council meetings, with the consent of the Residents' Council. 2021, c. 39, ss. 85 (3)

Posting of Residents' Council meeting minutes needs the approval of Council members.

Satisfaction survey

43. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that, unless otherwise directed by the Minister, at least once in every year, a survey is taken of the residents and their families and caregivers to measure their experience with the home and the care, services, programs and goods provided at the home. 2021, c. 39, s. 43 (1).

Action

(2) A licensee shall make every reasonable effort to act on the results of the survey and to improve the long-term care home and the care, services, programs and goods accordingly. 2021, c. 39, s. 43 (2).

Advice

(3) The licensee shall seek the advice of the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any, in carrying out the survey, and in acting on its results. 2021, c. 39, s. 43 (3).

- Residents' Council members have the right to have input into the development of their home's annual satisfaction survey.
- Residents' Council members have the right to have input into how the survey is carried out in their home.
- Residents' Council members have the right to offer suggestions on how to act upon areas requiring improvement in their home.

Documentation

(4) The licensee shall ensure that,

- (a) the results of the survey are documented and made available to the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any, to seek their advice under subsection (4);

The administration (as designate of licensee) must share the survey results with the Residents' Council members with the intent of receiving their advice on areas requiring improvement.

- (b) the actions taken to improve the long-term care home, and the care, services, programs and goods based on the results of the survey are documented and made available to the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any;

The administration (as designate of licensee) must ensure that any actions the home is undertaking to improve identified areas within the home are documented and shared with Residents' Council.

- (c) the document required by clauses (a) and (b) is made available to residents and their families; and

The document produced under (b) is available to any resident and any family member.



- (d) the documentation required by clauses (a) and (b) is kept in the long-term care home and made available during an inspection under Part X. 2021, c. 39, s. 43 (4).

The document must be kept by the home and OARC suggests that Residents' Council meeting minutes reflect their involvement in the home's satisfaction survey process in detail.

PART X COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Inspections

Meeting with Councils

148. Where an inspection is required under section 146, the inspector may meet with the Residents' Council or the Family Council, if requested or permitted to do so by the Council. 2021, c. 39, s. 148.

- The inspection referred to in section 146 covers any inspection of the home whether it is intended to investigate a complaint, investigate a critical incident, or carry out a follow-up inspection or an in-depth inspection of the home, known as an RQI (Resident Quality Inspection).
- During an RQI, a Residents' Council representative will always be interviewed.
- A Residents' Council may request an interview with an inspector relating to any of the other reasons for an investigation in the home.

Inspection report

152. (1) After completing an inspection, an inspector shall prepare an inspection report and give a copy of the report to the licensee and to the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any. 2021, c. 39, s. 152 (1).

A Residents' Council President will receive a summary of the inspection report directly from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. It is expected that this report be shared with Council members and discussed at a Council meeting.



Ontario Regulation 246/22

Communication methods



47. Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that strategies are developed and implemented to meet the needs of residents with compromised communication and verbalization skills, of residents with cognitive impairment and of residents who cannot communicate in the language or languages used in the home. O. Reg. 246/22, s. 47.

The administration (as designate of licensee) must develop alternative ways to communicate with residents who have difficulty communicating. Alternative methods need to be developed and implemented to ensure there are ways to communicate with all residents, e.g., Residents' Bill of Rights produced by the Aphasia Institute.

Menu planning

77. (2) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that, prior to being in effect, each menu cycle,

(a) is reviewed by the Residents' Council for the home;

The Residents' Council is aware of the home's menu cycle and has a committee in place to review menus being introduced prior to each cycle.

Dining and snack service

77. (7) The licensee shall ensure that meals and snacks are served at times agree upon by the Residents' Council and the Administrator or the Administrator's designate.

O. Reg. 246/22, s.390 (1)

- The Residents' Council has the right to review the dining room service, including choices available, as well as meal times.
- The Residents' Council has the right to review the snack service, including choices available, as well as the snack times.

Recreational and social activities program

71. (2) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that the program includes,



(d) opportunities for resident and family input into the development and scheduling of recreation and social activities. O. Reg. 246/22, s. 71 (2).

- The Residents' Council has the right to provide input in the choices of activities.
- The Residents' Council has the right to provide input relating to the scheduling of activities.
- See 63 (1) 4. Powers of a Residents' Council for related information.

REPORTING AND COMPLAINTS

The following legislation outlines the expectations for the general complaint process in the home. Note that this complaint process is separate from the one that exists for Residents' Councils.

Dealing with complaints

108. (1) Every licensee shall ensure that every written or verbal complaint made to the licensee or a staff member concerning the care of a resident or operation of the home is dealt with as follows:

1. The complaint shall be investigated and resolved where possible, and a response that complies with paragraph 3 provided within 10 business days of the receipt of the complaint, and where the complaint alleges harm or risk of harm to one or more residents, the investigation shall be commenced immediately.

All complaints, verbal or written, by an individual or a Residents' Council, should be investigated by the management of the home and resolved as quickly as possible.

2. For those complaints that cannot be investigated and resolved within 10 business days, an acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint shall be provided within 10 business days of receipt of the complaint including the date by which the complainant can reasonably expect a resolution, and a follow-up response that complies with paragraph 3 shall be provided as soon as possible in the circumstances.



Given that it may not be possible to investigate and resolve some complaints within 10 business days, management must acknowledge receipt of the complaint, communicate their plan to pursue the investigation, and provide the complainant with a schedule for resolving the issue.

3. The response provided to a person who made the complaint shall include,
 - ii. An explanation of,
 - A. what the licensee has done to resolve the complaint, or
 - B. that the licensee believes the complaint to be unfounded and the reasons for the belief. O. Reg. 79/10, s. 101 (1).

The complainant, whether an individual or the Council, has the right to receive a report detailing what has been done to resolve the complaint. If the licensee considers the complaint to be unfounded, they must provide an explanation as to why.

- (2) The licensee shall ensure that a documented record is kept in the home that includes,
 - (a) the nature of each verbal or written complaint;
 - (b) the date the complaint was received;
 - (c) the type of action taken to resolve the complaint, including the date of the action, time frames for actions to be taken and any follow-up action required;
 - (d) the final resolution, if any;



- (e) every date on which any response was provided to the complainant and a description of the response; and
 - (f) any response made in turn by the complainant.
- O. Reg. 246/22, s. 108 (3 ss. 2).

The licensee, through their designate, must keep a detailed record of the complaint. OARC suggests if Council is making the complaint, they also keep a detailed record of the complaint and all investigation correspondence for review at a Council meeting. Complaints and concerns brought forward by the Council to the administration can be effectively tracked using the OARC Meeting Minutes Template under the “Concern Response Review” section.

(3) The licensee shall ensure that,

- (a) the documented record is reviewed and analysed for trends at least quarterly;
- (b) the results of the review and analysis are taken into account in determining what improvements are required in the home; and
- (c) a written record is kept of each review and of the improvements made in response. O. Reg. 246/22, s. 108 (3 ss.3).

Continuous Quality Improvement

166. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall establish a continuous quality improvement committee.

(2) The continuous quality improvement committee shall be composed of at least the following persons:

9. One member of the home's Residents' Council.

168. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall prepare a report on the continuous quality improvement initiative for the home for each fiscal year no later



than three months after the end of the fiscal year and, subject to section 271, shall publish a copy of each report on its website.

(2) The report required under subsection (1) must contain the following information:

1. The name and position of the designated lead for the continuous quality improvement initiative.
2. A written description of the home's priority areas for quality improvement, objectives, policies, procedures and protocols for the continuous quality improvement initiative for the next fiscal year.
3. A written description of the process used to identify the home's priority areas for quality improvement for the next fiscal year and how the home's priority areas for quality improvement for the next fiscal year are based on the recommendations of the home's continuous quality improvement committee.
4. A written description of a process to monitor and measure progress, identify and implement adjustments, and communicate outcomes for the home's priority areas for quality improvement in the next fiscal year.
5. A written record of,
 - i. the date the survey required under section 43 of the Act was taken during the fiscal year,
 - ii. the results of the survey taken during the fiscal year under section 43 of the Act, and
 - iii. how, and the dates when, the results of the survey taken during the fiscal year under section 43 of the Act were communicated to the residents and their families, Residents' Council, Family Council, if any, and members of the staff of the home.
6. A written record of,
 - i. the actions taken to improve the long-term care home, and the care, services, programs and goods based on the documentation of the results of the survey taken during the fiscal year under clause 43 (5) (b) of the Act, the dates the actions were implemented and the outcomes of the actions,
 - ii. any other actions taken to improve the accommodation, care, services, programs, and goods provided to the residents in the home's priority areas for quality improvement during the fiscal year, the dates the actions were implemented and the outcomes of the actions,
 - iii. the role of the Residents' Council and Family Council, if any, in actions taken under subparagraphs i and ii,



- iv. the role of the continuous quality improvement committee in actions taken under subparagraphs i and ii, and
- v. how, and the dates when, the actions taken under subparagraphs i and ii were communicated to residents and their families, the Residents' Council, Family Council, if any, and members of the staff of the home.



(3) The licensee shall ensure that a copy of the report is provided to the Residents' Council and Family Council, if any.

Every home must develop a continuous quality improvement plan and representative of the Residents' Council must be on the Quality Committee. Every Residents' Council has the right to know which areas their home is focusing on. OARC suggests that the Resident Representative share the details and progress of the quality improvement plan as part of their report to Council every three months. This could be a time for celebration by inviting both the administration and the Council to be present and report.



AT THE END OF SECTION TWO, CONSIDER INSERTING A COPY OF:

- Your home's mission statement.
- Information your Council has created to be included in the information package provided to new residents (brochure or information sheet).
- Your home's most recent satisfaction survey and a summary of the results.
- The summary of your home's most recent inspection report.
- Your home's most recent menu cycle.
- Your home's current complaint resolution policy.

2.4 Cultivating Rich, Collaborative Partnerships

It takes a village, as the saying goes, to create a sustainable culture of mutual respect, understanding and collaboration among residents and other stakeholders within the home and surrounding community. When, residents, families, team members, volunteers, the home's management team, and the external community form meaningful, interdependent partnerships, you may find that these supportive connections help contribute to the success of your Residents' Council in some way. There is an inherent power in partnering; successful alliances create an environment that is enriched by the combined efforts and talents of everyone involved.

The Ingredients of Effective Partnerships

Establishing partnering relationships is important to the effectiveness of your Council. Partnering creates a supportive environment that benefits everyone. Effective partnerships have the following four main ingredients:

1. A clear vision of what each partner wants to accomplish and how they will work together as partners to get there. Partners collaborate and work to reach goals determined by the shared vision.
2. A commitment to specific goals, as well as to the partnership.
3. A plan to accomplish these goals.
4. Clear and respectful communication and boundaries.

Partnerships between Your Council and the External Community

Although the most direct benefits of a Residents' Council are to people living within your home, others in the external community are touched as well. Many homes' Residents' Councils facilitate opportunities for residents to participate in the life of the community at large through their advocacy efforts, as well as social events sponsored by their Residents' Council. Councils have told us that they have:

- Actively advocated for improved transportation within their community.
- Held fundraising events, such as yard sales, bake sales, raffles, 50/50 draws, BBQs and bazaars, to support their chosen community organizations or charities.
- Gathered ball caps, gloves, mitts and magazines for soldiers serving overseas.
- Engaged in intra-generational opportunities.
- Made and donated clothing, knitted blankets, quilts and food baskets to their local community or worship centre, acknowledging those in need of assistance.
- Hosted interactive social activities, such as making crafts with school children in the spirit of multi-generational kinship.
- Engaged in intergenerational programs and opportunities.



Families and friends deeply appreciate the work of Councils in actively welcoming new residents when they move into their new home and in helping make the transition more comfortable and enjoyable. We know of a few Councils that host a welcome dinner or reception for new residents to introduce Resident Council and leadership team members and encourage them to join. Some also show their warm hospitality by greeting new residents with a welcome gift or with a personal visit by a member of the Residents' Council Welcoming Committee.

Residents' Councils continue to play a valuable and influential educational role within the external community. Many Councils enthusiastically counteract assumptions and stereotypes associated with LTC homes by sharing their stories and demonstrating that their home is a place where residents live life to the fullest extent possible, have a meaningful role in their home's affairs, and can continue to be actively engaged in enjoyable interests that nurture the mind, body and spirit.

Partnerships between Your Council and the Management Team

Your home's management team plays a pivotal role in helping your Residents' Council be an effective and necessary part of the home's culture. By showing that they are prepared to work in partnership with residents to make the Council successful in the home, the management team serves as a positive role model to all team members and volunteers.



A management team that recognizes how the home can benefit from an effective Residents' Council and has a genuine desire to support residents who become involved in the work of the Council can strengthen the home's culture of continuous quality improvement (CQI) by considering issues raised at Council meetings and how they could be addressed as quality improvement projects.



A licensee shall co-operate with the Residents' Council, the Family Council, the Residents' Council assistant and the Family Council assistant and shall provide them with such financial and other information and such assistance as is provided for in the regulations. [2021, c. 39, s. 68]



There are many ways the home's management team can help improve the effectiveness and sustainability of your Residents' Council. Here are just a few to think about.

Regularly Consulting with Your Residents' Council

Your management team is required to develop and maintain processes in your home that measure and improve quality of living. Collectively, these are called the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program, and they must target positive change in accommodation, care, services, programs and goods provided to residents. Your Residents' Council is an invaluable part of the process because:

- the results of the CQI program must be communicated to your Residents' Council; and
- the opportunities for residents to be engaged in their own quality of living experiences through communication between management and the Residents' Council are endless.



The improvements made to the quality of the accommodation, care, services, programs and goods provided to the residents must be communicated to the Residents' Council, Family Council and the staff of the home on an ongoing basis. [O. Reg. 226/22, s. 168]

To harness residents' lived experiences and to effectively capture their input and recommendations for change, the home's management team must invite a resident from the Council to participate on the Quality Improvement Committee to be apart of the discussions and activities of the home's CQI team, to enrich the conversation, the overall experience and the project outcomes.



The development of your home's mission statement and the review process present another opportunity to work together through collaborative consultation. This activity can happen as often as deemed necessary but must occur at least every five years with the involvement of the Residents' Council, the management team, staff and volunteers.



The licensee shall ensure that the mission statement is developed, and revised as necessary, in collaboration with the Residents' Council and the Family Council, if any, and shall invite the staff of the long-term care home and volunteers to participate. [2021, c. 39, s. 4 (3)]

The home's administration is required to consult regularly with the Council, at least every three (3) months; however, to maintain a strong and mutually supportive relationship, we encourage Administrators to communicate more often. When the channels of communications are freely open and the relationship between the Council and the management team is robust, it tends to make it easier to work together.

Some Councils choose to invite their home's management team to their monthly meeting and some invite department managers and staff to come and talk about their role and the services they provide. This gives residents an opportunity to ask questions directly and have their questions answered right away. In the spirit of transparency and sharing, management teams and Residents' Councils have had good success in coming together to share new ideas. When respective experiences, preferences and challenges are understood by all, cooperation seems natural and issues can be resolved before they worsen.



A licensee has a duty to consult regularly with the Residents' Council, and with the Family Council, if any, and in any case shall consult with them at least every three months. [2021, c. 39, s. 73]

Addressing Issues in a Timely Manner

Your Residents' Council provides a wonderful opportunity to have a mutually supportive relationship with the home's management team in efforts to improve the quality of care and services to residents in your home. When members raise concerns, complaints or recommendations, we would encourage the Council and the home's management team to work collaboratively to address the issues whenever possible. They should consider the benefits of working outside the "organizational chart" and partnering with all team members to discover solutions through conversations with them.

The home's management team is required to investigate and respond to the Residents' Council in writing within ten (10) calendar days of receiving a concern, complaint or recommendation. If the situation cannot be investigated and resolved within that timeframe, the home's management team needs to inform the Council in writing within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the concern, complaint or recommendation, indicating they are aware of the issue and detailing the plan or next steps involved, in an attempt to work towards a resolution. Then give a date before the next scheduled Residents' Council meeting as to when the Council can expect a resolution and follow-up response. A written response from the management team, along with any further updates, will be shared at the next Residents' Council Meeting. Both parties are working proactively in "good faith," to deal with the issue together.



Rewriting Policies and Practices

The home's management team may consider inviting residents and team members to provide insights (based on their lived experiences) into the home/organization's policies and practises to identify possible revisions that promote inclusiveness and the ability of each person to be involved in their internal and external community. Supportive policies can help to remove physical and social barriers.

Culture Change and Enabling Practices



The home's management team has the power to inspire change in the culture of the residents' home. It is helpful to have a vision for what the desired change could look like and to share that vision with everyone. Effective and lasting change is more likely when it is understood by all and supported across the home. Often it is the small changes in thinking, practices and in the environment that have the biggest impact on people; however, change may be difficult if team members are not encouraged to be part of the process, even in the smallest of ways.

- One example of enabling team members that is worth thinking about is for the home's management team to make allowances for the Residents' Council assistant to have his or her regular duties covered by a colleague while they are directly supporting Residents' Council activities and meetings. This strategy will encourage the Residents' Council assistant to be fully engaged with the Council, not preoccupied by the typical duties of a regular day.
- Another enabling initiative is to encourage team members to put the person before the task by asking residents, "What does a good day look like for you?" By adopting a person-centred approach, team members can then look at how they can partner with the resident to make it a reality. Team members who strive to be more resident- or person-centred should be acknowledged or recognized wherever possible to reinforce (and standardize) these practises. .

"By pursuing what is right for the collective, others are motivated to take deep personal risks and follow their leaders' direction because the leader believes in the vision."

- Robert E. Quinn



OARC suggests regular meetings occur between the Council's leadership team members and the home's management team in order to strengthen their relationship.

Some management teams have supported the work of the Residents' Councils by ensuring that:

- Residents' Councils are engaged in the process of developing a Residents' Council brochure for their moving-in package (also known as their admission package).
- When moving in, residents have an opportunity to learn about their Residents' Council, either through written materials provided by the Council or when they are welcomed by a Residents' Council Welcoming Subcommittee member.
- There is a communication system in place to notify the Residents' Council leadership team when a new resident is expected to move into the home. This allows resident leaders to be proactive in the provision of peer support and other welcoming initiatives for new residents during their transition to long-term care.
- When moving in, residents are encouraged (and assisted) to attend Residents' Council meetings to actively participate in activities/social events in accordance with the resident's preferences.
- During orientation, all team members, students, volunteers and other stakeholders working within the home have the opportunity to learn about resident rights and the Residents' Council's role and contributions to their home and to the external community. The home's supportive culture towards the Residents' Council should also be clearly communicated during the orientation process.
- If a resident is nominated to join OARC's provincial Board of Directors, assistance is offered to them so they may fully and effectively participate in their role; for example, by dedicating a suitable space in the home for an OARC Board member to carry out the work of the Board or by arranging for a care partner to accompany a Board member to an off-site OARC meeting so they can offer personal assistance to the resident as required.
- Private space (preferably behind closed doors), with minimal noise and distractions, is arranged for Council meetings.
- Residents' Council assistants are allocated protected time to provide assistance to the Council, as required.
- Efforts are made to provide additional coverage for team members and volunteers to help residents arrive at Council meetings on time.

Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council



- Residents receive physical assistance, as required, to be able to get to and from meetings and to participate fully in Council activities.
- Those serving on the Council Executive/leadership team are publicly recognized and their contributions celebrated.
- The Council has the opportunity to collaboratively develop, and revise as necessary, the home's mission statement along with team members, families, volunteers and other stakeholders
- Legally required information, such as the most recent minutes of the Residents' Council meetings (with the consent of the Council), is posted in the home in a visible and easily accessible location.
- The home's management, team members and other guests only attend Council meetings when invited.
- Council members are told about suggested changes in their home's/organization's policies and have opportunities to share their thoughts, ideas, concerns and recommendations before changes that affect them are made.
- The Council's recommendations are given serious consideration and acted upon whenever possible. The home's Administrator must provide written acknowledgement of the recommendation (or other question/concern presented by Council) within 10 calendar days.
- Financial support is provided for Council activities, if necessary.

Approaches we use to work with our home's management team and other team members in order to identify and resolve issues include the following:

- establishing good communications with them;
- letting them know that we are trying to work together as a team for the better interest of the residents;
- showing them that we are able to help where necessary;
- being open to what they say; and
- providing them with an explanation of what residents are requesting.

A member of the management team



"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." - John Quincy Adams

We advise Councils to take the time necessary to wisely select their Residents' Council assistant and determine if the person is willing and able to effectively respond to the Council's needs.



Can you think of the qualities you would like your Residents' Council assistant to have so they are able to successfully support your Council? Ask yourself, "Is this person..."

- Supportive of Residents' Council?
- Able to see the Council as a valuable part of improving quality in the home?
- Able to maintain confidentiality regarding the Council's affairs?
- Considerate and respectful?
- Collaborative?
- Resourceful?
- Trustworthy?
- Responsive?
- Positive and encouraging?
- Reliable?

Ask yourself, "Will this person..."

- Be willing to assist the Council to achieve its maximum level of independence?
- Resist the temptation to take over by recognizing the difference between supporting and educating the Council as opposed to "doing" for the Council?
- Resist the temptation to impose their ideas on members?



Finding a person who is the "right fit" for the Residents' Council assistant role is an important and necessary step. While this individual is typically appointed by the home's Administrator, the selected individual must be acceptable to the Council. OARC recommends that Residents' Councils allocate time to discuss and carefully review the suitability and fit of their assistant on an annual basis. If necessary, Councils can work with the home's Administrator to select a new assistant to support the Council moving forward. The OARC Meeting Minute template prompts Council to consider implementing this annual review as a promising practise.

How Residents' Council Assistants Can Work with Your Council to Provide Support

Sometimes the Residents' Council may not want or require assistance, but when it is needed, your Residents' Council assistant can provide support by:

- asking the Council how they can be of assistance;
- offering to help members develop the skills necessary for the Council to run effective meetings;
- helping with booking private meeting rooms;
- notifying the home's Environmental Services team of upcoming meetings and request assistance with room set up (including tables, chairs and microphone);
- working with the Council's leadership team to plan the agenda;
- offering to assist the Secretary or other resident leader(s) with recording, preparing and circulating the minutes;
- offering to help with projects the Council may wish to undertake;
- helping to prepare the Residents' Council Bylaws documents for the Council structure and continuity;
- helping to develop and execute the election process; and
- helping the Council understand when a condition is mandated by legislation and when a condition is expected under the home or organization's policy.



A licensee of a long-term care home shall not prevent a member of the Residents' Council or Family Council from entering the long-term care home to attend a meeting of the Council or to perform any functions as a member of the Council and shall not otherwise hinder, obstruct or interfere with such a member carrying out those functions. [2021, c. 39, s. 71(c)]



Reflect on the partnership between your Council and your Residents' Council assistant. Then, ask yourself...

- In addition to the above-noted acts of service, what other things do you find helpful?
- Can you think of other ways that your Residents' Council assistant can better support your Council in the future?

Some Ways Residents' Council Assistants Can Support Council Meetings

Before a meeting, consider:

- consulting with the Council to choose a suitable meeting space;
- encouraging residents to raise discussion items to be added to the agenda;
- posting the meeting agenda and reminder notices on bulletin boards, social calendars, in-room flyers, in newsletters and in any other communications at least two weeks prior to the meeting;
- reminding residents of the upcoming Council meeting on the day of the meeting; and
- partnering with resident leaders, team members and volunteers to verbally remind residents of the upcoming meeting and to encourage them to attend.

During a meeting, consider:

- offering to serve as timekeeper to help the meeting stay on schedule;
- encouraging the Learning Circle model of sharing;
- offering to support the democratic process by making sure members have an equal opportunity to contribute to discussions and to have their ideas and viewpoints considered in the course of making decisions; and
- offering any other support as requested by the Council.
- helping to ensure meeting accessibility for all participants (see sections 3.4 and 3.5 for more information)

After a meeting, consider:

- assisting the Secretary with preparing and posting the minutes, for approval (the minutes must be approved by a member of the Residents' Council leadership team prior to posting);
- informing the home's management and team members of Council decisions and the reasoning behind them, if directed to do so by Council; and
- assisting in following-up with the home's management team concerning Council issues, if requested by the Council.



Our Residents' Council Assistant supports our Council by assisting with:

- banking, if Council members are unable to do so;
- record keeping and taking minutes;
- setting up spaces where residents can meet and have privacy;
- creating an open culture within the home;
- forming policies and procedures; and
- educating residents about the Residents' Council.

A resident

Partnerships between Your Council, Volunteers and Team Members

All team members and volunteers, no matter their position within the home or what their duties are, are welcome to offer assistance to help the Residents' Council effectively achieve its goals. Assistance can come in many forms.

How Team Members and Volunteers Can Work with Your Council to Provide Support

- Act as champions for the Council by reminding residents of upcoming meetings and encouraging residents to get involved in Council activities.
- Learn more about the responsibilities and functions of the Residents' Council.
- Promote and support Residents' Council's projects, fundraisers and events.
- Publicize the Council's meetings, activities and accomplishments; for example, on the monthly Activity Schedule.
- Help residents receive assistance, if needed, to get to meetings and activities on time and to their home area afterwards.
- Remaining flexible and person-centred by offering to reschedule activities of daily living (ADLs), such as baths, to allow residents the opportunity to attend Council meetings or other preferred activities.
- Accompany OARC Board members to Board meetings, or arrange for a care partner to do so, with the intent of supporting their needs.



"Happiness is an attitude. We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same."

- Francesca Reigler

Partnerships between Your Residents' Council & Family Council



Some Residents' Councils have an evolving partnership with their home's Family Council and some do not. OARC advocates for positive and cooperative relations between the Residents' Council and Family Council but advises to not merge the two Councils. Only family members must have membership within their Family Council, and only residents must have membership within your Residents' Council. The intent of the law that governs this is to provide a safe, non-threatening peer meeting so that concerns can be openly shared and reviewed from the same perspective.



Our Residents' Council and Family Council didn't have a partnership a year ago. Over time, we have come up with opportunities for us to work together. For example, now the Presidents of both Councils meet on a regular basis to share information. Both also meet with our home's management team to problem-solve issues. It's been working really well.

A Residents' Council Assistant



As a Council, consider brainstorming specific ways that Residents' Councils and Family Councils can coordinate efforts in reaching mutual goals. It may also be helpful to identify communication strategies in order to meet and collaborate in between respective Council meetings, through informal discussions or through a more structured subcommittee

2.5 Common Residents' Council Structures

There are various models to consider for your Council's structure.



Before we discuss three classic examples, it is important for us to reiterate that there is no right or wrong way to organize your Council and your leadership team does not have to be structured in a traditionally formal way with conventional titles. Your Council may decide on a completely different structure from those discussed in this resource guide, or perhaps a decision is made to adopt certain elements of

different models that better meet the needs of your home's residents. We recognize that some Councils can be small and informal and meet occasionally, whereas others can be larger, more formal, and may meet more often. Regardless, it is important to choose a structure that is best suited to your situation and one that will help your Council to be most effective.

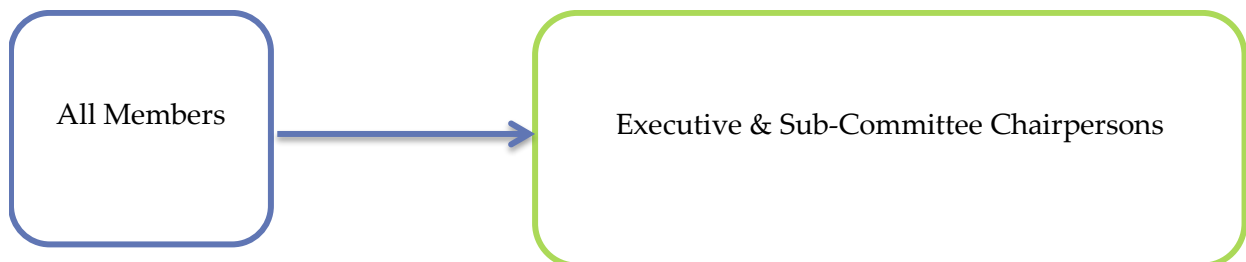
Whatever model is preferred, it is important that it be flexible enough to change if residents' needs can be better met by trying a different way of structuring your Council. Once approved, any update or changes to the Council structure should be captured in your Residents' Council Bylaws document.

Structures to Consider

Reflect on the following models and decide if any of these might work for your Council:

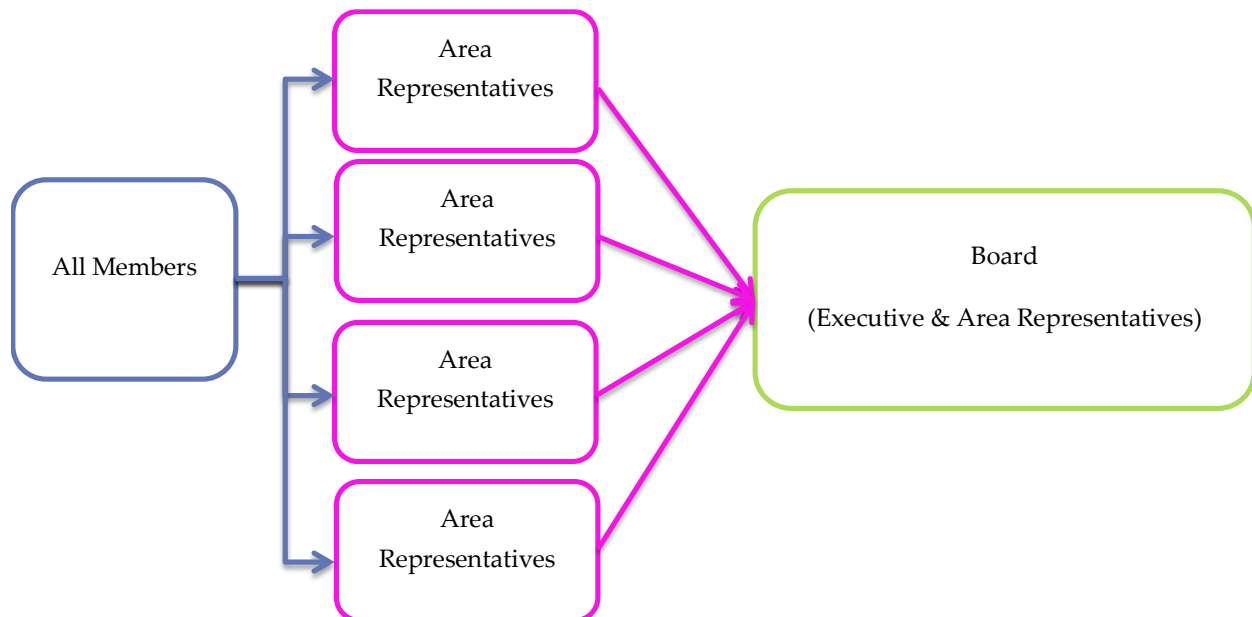
Option A: Town Meeting Model

- Tends to be effective in smaller homes.
- All residents are invited to attend and participate in all meetings.



Option B: Representative or Board of Directors Model

- Elected or recruited resident Representatives from various areas of the home represent all residents who live on every home area or floor at Council meetings.
- These "Home Area Representatives," together with the Residents' Council Executive, form the Council's Board of Directors, a type of leadership team which represents the entire home.
- Tends to be effective in larger homes.
- This model requires the Council to have a process for involving all residents. Many homes choose to have regularly scheduled sub-council meetings on each floor or residential area to connect and support each other, discuss issues, convey information, and share ideas.
- The Home Area Representative chairs their area's sub-council meetings and then takes the concerns and ideas of the residents to the larger Residents' Council meeting and reports back to the residents they represent about Council activities and decisions.
- The Residents' Council may call special meetings where all residents are encouraged to attend and participate.



Option C: Blended Model

- A made-to-order structure that falls somewhere in between the Representative/Board of Directors model and the open Town Meeting model.



Note: The structure of a Residents' Council is determined by the group and the decisions are written in the Council's Bylaws document and adopted by all members. See "Developing Your Residents' Council Bylaws" on page 79.

Subcommittees of the Residents' Council

Much of the work of a Residents' Council is better served through the work of smaller subcommittees of residents. Each subcommittee has a dedicated purpose and may have an elected or nominated Subcommittee Chairperson. For example, a subcommittee may be formed to plan events or assist residents who have recently moved into their new home.

Features of a Residents' Council Subcommittee

- Typically, several residents, often less than ten people, serve on a subcommittee.
- Subcommittee membership can be opened up to interested residents who are not on the Residents' Council leadership team.
- The subcommittee meets regularly to discuss ideas and concerns related to their focus and to work with the appropriate members of the home's management team to resolve issues. These meetings could involve the Residents' Council assistant, if desired.
- The subcommittee may communicate progress or updates related to their activities/initiatives by providing a Committee report at the general Residents' Council meeting, or through other desired avenues such as newsletter articles, posters or by or posting subcommittee meeting minutes (if applicable).

Benefits of a Subcommittee

Regardless of what structure a Council chooses to model itself after, the group can benefit from establishing a few subcommittees which will be able to:

- Help explore issues and focus efforts on a particular topic/area that the Council as a whole might otherwise not be able to properly consider.
- Foster a safe gathering place for exchanging ideas and having in-depth discussions of issues and potential solutions.
- Provide opportunities for residents not on their Council's leadership team to display leadership as Chair of a Council subcommittee.
- Help strengthen relationships and partnerships among members as a result of working towards common goals.



A sub-committee should exist only so long as it serves a purpose.

Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council



- Present new opportunities to involve residents with the added mutual benefit of using and developing members' skills. On the one hand, subcommittees help increase residents' participation while benefiting from their collective wisdom and skills. On the other hand, members who serve on subcommittees are likely to develop skills and gain knowledge of issues which they may not otherwise get.

Some subcommittees are temporary, formed to carry out a specific project with an expected end date. When that project is over, the subcommittee is disbanded. Additionally, some subcommittees are ongoing. Councils can form new subcommittees as needed and disband others when their work is completed.



Consider all residents as potential candidates when choosing subcommittee members. Residents who have been reluctant to participate in the Council or take on a leadership role may be interested in serving on a subcommittee instead. Subcommittees may have special appeal because they are small and focus on a specific subject.

"Cooperation is the thorough conviction that nobody can get there unless everybody gets there."

- Virginia Burden

Common Subcommittees Formed by Residents' Councils

<i>Welcoming Subcommittee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcomes new residents when they move into the home.• Introduces new residents to others and offers to take them on a tour of the home.• Explains the purpose of the Residents' Council and invites new residents to attend the next meeting.• Encourages new residents to participate in activities/life at the home.• Promotes peer-to-peer support during the initial transition to long-term care.
<i>Food/Dietary Subcommittee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works with other residents and dietary managers/team members on menu selection.• Meets with the dietician to discuss nutrition, healthy food choices, and other areas of interest.• Surveys residents on their food preferences.• Acts as taste testers when a menu or product/supplier change is planned.• Meets with residents to hear complaints and suggestions.
<i>Program and Activities Subcommittee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviews and evaluates programs.• Suggests new ideas or assists with planning and hosting special events and social gatherings.• Works with team members to plan/develop recreational programs.
<i>Sunshine Subcommittee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognizes resident and team member birthdays and other milestones/special occasions.• Helps with the home's newsletter or Residents' Council website (if applicable).• Keeps residents advised about the activities of the Council.• Keeps track of residents who are ill or hospitalized.• Supports residents who may not have much family support.• Attends funerals and gives support to family members.
<i>Other Subcommittees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality Improvement Committee• Grievance or Advocacy Subcommittee• Pastoral Care or Spiritual Subcommittee• Residents' Rights Subcommittee• Volunteer Service Subcommittee• Program Planning/Fundraising Subcommittee

Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council



- Palliative Care Subcommittee



2.6 Residents' Council Assistant's Learning Needs Self-Assessment

This is meant to be a quick self-assessment for staff working with their Residents' Council. It is intended to help you define your own capabilities and learning needs. You may find it helpful to photocopy this page so that you can continue to use this checklist when you reassess your learning needs. Consider using this tool to reflect on your strengths and on which skills you believe could be improved.

Below is a list of common tasks performed by Residents' Council assistant. Ask yourself what you already know how to do, what might take a refresher or skills update, and what you would have to learn how to do. Indicate if the task is not applicable. You can also add tasks to this list, based on the needs of your Residents' Council.

The Task	Can Do This Now	Need Refresher on How to...	Need to Learn How to...	Not Applicable
Help to organize meetings				
Secretarial or administrative duties				
Bookkeeping				
Help maintain democratic meetings				
Publicize and promote Council meetings and events				
Use and promote the Learning Circle model of sharing				
Coach others				
Inform residents of their rights and powers under the LTCHA				
Obtain answers to questions				
Implement Council decisions				
Help with nominations/elections				
Assist with special events				
Assist with fundraising				
Uphold, review & understand residents' rights				

Self-Reflection Checklist

We encourage Residents' Council assistants to routinely practice self-examination in order to identify new opportunities to effectively support the Residents' Council. As Council members change, so does your work. The questions in this checklist will help you reflect on your ability to effectively support the Council. Ask yourself:



- What do I need to do to...?
- How can I best support the Council to...?
- What information and knowledge do I need?
- What assistance or support do I need?
- What resources can help me?
- Is this the best way to accomplish...?
- What obstacles might block the achievement of...?
- How will I know if I...?

Asking for Feedback

Seeking feedback is a wonderful way to discover how others perceive us and our capabilities. We encourage you to obtain feedback from your Residents' Council leadership team, which will likely provide you with greater awareness of your strengths and opportunities for learning. Consider asking, "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

Consider making a list of questions you want to ask the Council. You may want to get feedback on how you can better assist the Council with particular elements of their work. Strive to use their feedback to help develop your learning goals.



Questions you may choose to ask the Council's leadership team include the following:


- What do you think I do well?
- Can you give me an example of how I effectively help the Council?
- Can you give me an example of what areas I need to improve?

You may want to ask your supervisor to include this self-assessment in your human resources file as one component of your professional development plan.

2.7 *Qualities of an Effective Residents' Council*

It takes many dedicated people working harmoniously together for a Residents' Council to thrive. Bearing in mind that each home is unique as are the residents living there, an effective Council strives to reflect and meet the needs of the residents it serves. Your Council's strengths and successes are maximized when your home's management team:

- values a two-way relationship of cooperation and support;
- understands how to draw on the collective wisdom and value of your Council meetings;
- is available to help your Council overcome any difficulties; and
- is willing to make positive changes within your home, based on what is brought forward from your Residents' Council.



Residents' Councils may be considered effective by the extent to which they achieve the goals they establish for themselves.



Common Characteristics

Ask yourself if your Council possesses these desirable qualities:

- The Council strives to be inclusive and representative of all residents.
- The Council promotes a sense of belonging and a safe gathering place where residents can inspire and support each other.
- The Council sparks residents' curiosity and interest.
- All residents are informed about the Council, its accomplishments and successes, and are encouraged to attend meetings
- All residents are invited to participate in the Council either through their attendance at the meetings or through opportunities to express themselves to their Home Area Representatives.

Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council



- Ideas, suggestions and concerns are conveyed to the home's management team in the spirit of problem-solving together.
- The Council strives to build and promote relationships with all residents, staff and volunteers.

2.8 Establishing Your Residents' Council

Things to Think About When Establishing Your Council

Prior to starting a Residents' Council, you may want to reflect on factors that might influence your planning. Although the existence of a Residents' Council is legislatively required, your Council should be uniquely suited to the residents who live in your LTC home. Take some time to consider the following.

What Are our Residents' Concerns, Needs and Interests?

Earlier we spoke of how an effective Council reflects and meets the needs of the residents it serves; therefore, you might want to chat with residents to learn more about their concerns, needs and interests. While not all residents may want to be involved in forming or shaping the Council, it is beneficial to ask for their opinions, ideas and feelings about establishing a Residents' Council to ensure their future support. After all, the purpose of a Residents' Council never changes:



- A Residents' Council is "for Residents, by Residents."
- Residents' Councils represent the collective voice of all residents in the home.
- The Residents' Council is a legislated opportunity for residents to come together privately to discuss, share and debate issues of importance to them.

We have found that residents usually want to be involved and stay involved when they notice that their Council is able to work cooperatively with the home's management team to address issues which may affect them.

Who Will Help Us with Planning and Forming our Residents' Council?

A designated Residents' Council assistant can assist residents, if requested, in planning and coordinating the activities required to establish a Residents' Council. To help all residents feel more invested in their new Council, consider involving as many residents as possible in the early stages.

How Can our Council Ensure it Is Inclusive and Representative of All Residents?

The chief ingredients making up your Residents' Council are the individual residents living in your home. Because each person can and does make a valuable difference in the unique ways that they are able to contribute, strive to keep your Council inclusive and representative of all residents. Ask yourself if:



- the agenda or minutes need to be printed in larger text;
- written materials should also be visual, i.e., icons/pictures;
- a microphone will be needed;
- there are sufficient team members or volunteers to help residents get to meetings on time (everyone's responsibility is to "be a friend" and to extend a personal invitation to attend the Residents' Council meetings);
- Council meetings should be more frequent, shorter and have fewer participants in order to increase the involvement of residents with more complex needs; and
- it will be necessary to elect or nominate Home Area Representatives to your leadership team so they can host meetings in specific areas of the home because of a large number of residents who are not able to leave their area.

Many residents live with cognitive changes which may affect their ability to express themselves and participate freely in their Residents' Council meetings. These residents may have issues to discuss and experiences to share but cannot do so independently.



OARC recommends that residents who are cognitively well spend some time with those who live with cognitive changes. By doing so, residents who can participate and speak on behalf of others can do so with increased awareness and empathy. Time can be spent visiting residents in small groups, observing their environment and in one-to-one activities. Speak with your Recreation and Social Activities team members to discover some pleasurable, interesting and engaging ideas to try out as you seek to understand the complexities of your co-residents. Your Residents' Council meetings will be enhanced as residents strive to support co-residents in this way.

How Do We Manage Resistance?

Are you experiencing any resistance or indifference from either residents, home management or team members to the idea of having an actively engaged Residents' Council? It is normal for a person to show some resistance when anticipating or experiencing a change that may affect them. We hope you will feel assured that successfully handling resistance to change is a learned skill that takes time to develop. Patience and perseverance are needed to understand people's reasons for resisting. One approach which has been quite successful involves two steps:




1. Invite the person to express what they are worried about while you actively listen and strive to understand. You may wish to ask:
 - a. "Tell me why you feel this way."
 - b. "Please help me understand what is bothering you."
2. After the person's apprehensions have been acknowledged, consider asking open-ended questions to prompt them to suggest solutions to their concerns.
 - a. "What could we possibly do differently?"
 - b. "Would you consider sharing your concerns at a meeting or would you mind if Council members discussed this issue, in order to come up with some possible solutions?"

"It is not enough to be compassionate – you must act."

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Planning Stages

By law, every home in Ontario must establish a Residents' Council. Formally establishing your Residents' Council can be an exciting and creative pursuit given there is no single recipe. Your Council is unique, so you can expect your journey of planning, generating ideas, and hosting your first meeting to be as well. You might find it helpful to complete each of the four steps below, in consultation with the OARC, and then modify different elements to suit your needs. Over time or with significant changes on the resident leadership team, you might also consider revisiting some of these foundational stages. This will help to refresh or refamiliarize an existing Council with the goals and purpose of a Residents' Council



Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that a Residents' Council is established in the home. 2021, c. 39, s. 62 (1).

1. Have a Brainstorming Session to Gather Information and Explore Ideas

Residents typically welcome the idea of having a Residents' Council in their home, but may not know exactly what it is, what is involved in forming or running a Council, or how to actively participate in its activities or meetings. In the early stages of structuring a Council, you may wish to provide these details to all residents, staff, volunteers and the home's management team to support a culture of shared understanding. Here are some suggestions.

- Call a meeting and invite residents, the home's management, team members, families and volunteers interested in helping to form a Residents' Council to attend.
- Discuss what a Residents' Council is, how it works, what the Council does, and the reason Residents' Councils were legislated.
- Discuss the value of a Residents' Council and collectively explore the diverse benefits for staff, residents, families, the external community and your home.
- Discuss roles and work together to brainstorm agreed upon responsibilities of the home's management, team members and Council members by using this guide, OARC and the FLTCA as resources.
- Identify potential residents to join the Residents' Council leadership team or subcommittees.



- Plan an exploratory meeting inclusive of all residents to discuss the finer points to developing your Residents' Council.
- Consult Appendix 1 in the back of this guide for further resources.

During a brainstorming session when everyone's thoughts are organically flowing, there are no wrong ideas. Everyone needs to feel welcome to freely voice their perspectives and inspired thoughts without fear of judgement.

2. Introduce the Idea of a Residents' Council

Once you feel that you have gathered enough information from your brainstorming session, it is likely time to invite all residents—and others you would like—to attend a general information session during which the concept of a Residents' Council can be shared and discussed. Presenting the idea of a Residents' Council is an open invitation for residents to become involved and contribute to their home's continuous quality improvement process. You may wish to ask a representative from an established Residents' Council in another home to come and talk about the benefits of forming a Council and to also share their personal experiences with having a Council. Your primary goal at this first meeting is to form a Planning Committee whose purpose it is to lay the groundwork for an effective Residents' Council.

Strategies to Consider in Preparation for your General Meeting:

- Choose an optimal time and comfortable location to gather. Ask to have the tables and chairs arranged to encourage the fullest possible participation.
- A microphone will ensure everyone can follow the discussion.
- Publicize the meeting and the value of a Residents' Council. You may want to speak directly with residents or use other means, such as newsletters, posters and electronic boards. One creative Council places notices in plastic holders on dining tables on the day of the meeting. Consider that residents will need to know *why* the meeting is being held, and *why* they may want to attend.
- Think about how attendees will be made to feel welcome and comfortable.
- Arrange for team members or volunteer support to help residents get to the meeting on time.
- Decide who will take notes to track ideas, suggestions and offers of assistance.
- Decide who will chair or co-chair the general meeting.
- Decide how much time will be required for each item and speaker, and how much time will be protected for questions and discussion so that the meeting is both informative and enjoyable.

3. *Form a Planning Committee*



In general, your Planning Committee typically consists of residents who have expressed a keen interest in collaboratively working together to establish their Residents' Council. If a resident on your Planning Committee has complex needs or particular challenges and requires assistance, arrange to have a team member or a volunteer available to support them so they may be able to fully participate in the process.

Planning Committee members are elected by their peers, volunteer to serve, or simply asked to help. Using a resident strengths-based approach may help you identify potential residents within the home to be part of these planning stages. These residents may emerge as potential leaders to serve on the Residents' Council leadership team once the Council is formalized.

Responsibilities of the Planning Committee

The Planning Committee's purpose is to bring the concept of your Residents' Council to life. Please remember that you have the support of your Residents' Council assistant and your home's management team. Traditionally, the Planning Committee will:

- initially draft a set of rules under which the Council will operate, known as the Bylaws (refer to the OARC Bylaw Template to help guide you through this process);
- find residents who would like to serve on the Council's leadership team;
- propose an initial list of objectives for the Council to work towards achieving; and
- establish essential Council subcommittees, such as a Welcoming or Food/Dietary subcommittee. A list of common subcommittees can be found on page 58.

While this committee needs to have a deadline by which to complete its work and a schedule of milestones, the group will want to work slowly and deliberately to be productive. Bringing an idea to life takes time, teamwork, patience, energy and a variety of talents. It can often take several months for a Planning Committee to complete its work. We would like to suggest connecting with other homes nearby to learn about their experiences with forming a Council and discover what strategies worked for them.

During the Term of the Planning Committee, the group may want to:

- meet often, keeping in mind their schedule and deadline for completing their work;
- share tasks among committee members to distribute the work;
- come together to resolve difficulties and to offer positive encouragement and support;
- keep minutes of meetings and record all decisions and completed tasks;
- regularly report their progress to back to the residents and other stakeholders as desires/appropriate;
- continue promoting the idea of a Residents' Council with residents, team members, volunteers and the home's management team;
- create opportunities to speak directly with residents in order to understand and respond to any concerns they may have;
- brainstorm the qualities desired on the Council's leadership team, which will likely help position the Council to be democratic and effective in serving its members; and
- plan a second general meeting to share and discuss the recommendations of the Planning Committee.

To recruit members, our Council:

- welcomes everyone when they move into the home and provides them with information about the Residents' Council, and on how we can improve their quality of life in their new home;
- creates positive relationships with all residents, and greets everyone with a nice, "good morning," and a genuine smile;
- works with team members to invite residents to join the Council;
- lets residents know that we really care and that we are there for them; and
- promotes friendships and trust within our home.

A resident



4. Hold Your Residents' Council Founding Meeting

When the Planning Committee has finished its work, it is time to call a second general meeting where the committee can share its outcomes and discuss its decisions with residents and others who are invited to attend.



We encourage you to give the same attention to organizing this meeting as was given to coordinating the first general meeting where the concept of a Residents' Council was first proposed.

Your Planning Committee may find it helpful to:

- write an agenda for the meeting which includes all topics for discussion and the order in which they will be discussed;
- choose two residents who can temporarily perform the duties of Chairperson and Secretary until the official leadership team is elected;
- prepare written materials that you anticipate will be required in the meeting; for example, if the Bylaws are to be discussed, you will want to make copies of the drafts available for each person attending;
- consider limiting the conversation, if time is limited, to (i) proposing a Council structure, (ii) drafting a list of nominees for the leadership team, and (iii) holding elections; and
- distribute copies of the initial list of objectives for your Council to work towards achieving as well as your draft Constitution and Bylaws so that people can review them before the next scheduled meeting.

Congratulations!!! Your Residents' Council is now formally established with a temporary or newly elected leadership team that is ready to begin their work of developing and growing your Council.

2.9 Establishing Your Residents' Council Leadership Team

Residents' Councils vary in size and formality. Some choose to not use traditional titles on their leadership team, while others have elected to establish a traditional executive structure with officers to handle the general administration of the Council. There are several models a Council can choose to structure its leadership team after.

For ease of reading, this guide will use the term “leadership team” as a broad reference to every type of leadership structure a Council may choose to adopt. Each of the four options listed below are examples of different types of leadership teams. How will your Council choose to configure its leadership team?

Option A: Traditional Executive Structure

Council members may decide to elect an executive team comprised of four distinct positions, known as officers, with specific responsibilities. The most typical positions are:

- a President;
- one or more Vice President (s);
- a Secretary; and
- a Treasurer.

You may find that some residents are reluctant to take on a particular executive role, such as that of President or Treasurer. One creative way to overcome this is to consider having two or three residents share a position, taking turns performing the functions of that role. For example, a Council can choose to have two residents share the role of Treasurer or President.

Option B: Merged Officers Structure

Council members may decide to combine a few of the executive positions. For example, homes may have one person acting as a Secretary-Treasurer who takes on the responsibilities of both roles.



Option C: Shared Leadership Team Structure

Council members may decide to combine all of the four executive positions and collectively be known as the “Residents’ Council leadership team,” without using traditional titles. This type of team collectively assumes the accountabilities of a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Your Council can decide what titles to use (or to not use) based on what you feel would work well.

Sharing the administrative responsibilities across the leadership team is attractive to many people because it:

- promotes a resident strengths-based approach when selecting or identifying potential resident leaders within the home
- encourages the elected leaders of the Council to cooperatively work as a group;
- dilutes the pressure of feeling specialized expertise is required for certain assignments; and
- gives each leadership team member an opportunity to learn and use different skills.

Option D: Board of Directors Structure (Officers plus Home Area Representatives)

The composition of a Board of Directors may be different from home to home and your Council is responsible for recording this position in your Constitution and Bylaws.

Council members may decide to recruit or elect a group of Home Area Representatives to stand for the residents of a particular area in the home at meetings in addition to having a traditional Executive (option A) or a Merged Officers (option B) structure. Collectively, the Officers and the Home Area Representatives are considered a full Board of Directors. Under this model, the Home Area Representatives are not considered part of the formal Executive body of Officers.

In homes that chose a Shared Leadership Team structure (option C) and decide to recruit or elect a group of Home Area Representatives—as a united entity, this group is also called a Board of Directors; however, the difference is that the Home Area Representatives are considered contributing members of the Council’s leadership team and share equal responsibility for running the Council.

Qualities You Would Like in Your Leadership Team

We advise residents to take the time necessary to wisely select their leadership team and determine if each person being considered to serve on that team has desirable qualities that will make your Council a safe, secure and comfortable place for all residents to openly share their ideas and concerns.



Can you think of the qualities you would like potential leadership team members to have to help create an inclusive Council where residents can share their thoughts and experiences, and also offer each other comfort and mutual support? Ask yourself, "Is this person..."

- Democratic in nature?
- Approachable and welcoming?
- Calm and not easily flustered?
- Positive and considerate in nature?
- Able to encourage residents to share their thoughts and experiences or to participate in activities and meetings?
- Respectful of the diversity of opinions and abilities?
- A collaborative team player?
- A good listener?
- Trustworthy, reliable, responsible and accountable?
- Willing to ask for help?
- Willing to ask others to do tasks that will help the Council?
- Organized?
- Willing to set aside personal interests in order to achieve a common goal?
- Able to guide conversation and activities but not dominate?
- Accurate with numbers (recommended for treasurer)?

Dismantling the Hierarchy within Your Council's Leadership Team

Creating a Council of equals requires dismantling the traditional hierarchy of roles, representing the collective voice of residents, and sharing various responsibilities across the group. This calls for a collective commitment to do the work required in order to achieve true collaboration and partnership.



At its foundation, nurturing partnerships is about building trusting relationships and mutual respect, which must organically sprout at its own instinctive pace. When achieved, this process—rooted in the overarching principles of democracy—gives your Council much more flexibility in the way the work gets done. When you release your leadership team from functioning within a social hierarchy, people are better able to lead in situations that can leverage everyone's strengths. Your team then becomes the facilitator of your Council's success.

We would like to offer a practical approach to help you dismantle the leadership hierarchy. It is typically based on a profoundly different view of authority: the shared power of synergy rather than power over or top-down control. It involves a style of leadership which recognizes that everyone's experience and opinion matters and seeks to serve its members. This requires self-awareness, a willingness to be vulnerable, and a readiness to engage in configuring the dynamic of your leadership team to a participatory partnership.

Consider the benefits of implementing this particular approach for your Council.

It's all about the people... about our relationships and how we treat each other as human beings.

A resident



A leadership approach of shared synergy is based on four key principles:

1. Working towards inclusion. Members on your leadership team will need to consciously share responsibilities.
2. Placing a high value on practising open, mutually respectful communication. Consider opportunities for your leadership team to learn and practice effective communication skills.
3. Recognizing individual and team efforts. While it is good to recognize individuals, it is also very important to recognize achievements through authentic teamwork.
4. Accepting and encouraging other ways of knowing, learning and contributing. Wisdom comes from many sources. Your leadership team may wish to consider publicly acknowledging and honouring diverse perspectives and opinions as those opportunities arise.



You may find using this approach creates fertile ground for promoting active participation among your leadership team members where they can role model open communication and democratic problem-solving. Members will recognize the cooperative attitude among the leadership team and this will foster a more relaxed atmosphere for all.

The spark of hope for developing a leadership team of equals is kindled in members of the leadership team who recognise the need to make changes to the power dynamic.

When your efforts are combined, you may realize the power expressed in two ancient African proverbs: "When spider webs unite, they can stop a lion." Alternatively, in another African proverb: "If you wish to go faster, go alone, but if you wish to go further, go together."

Roles and Responsibilities of Your Leadership Team

Below is a brief outline of the traditional duties of each member serving on a Council's leadership team, using as an example, a Board of Directors structure that has Officers and several Home Area Representatives. Sometimes, because of the generous assistance available through a Residents' Council assistant, certain titles, such as Secretary or Treasurer, do not necessarily include all of the duties usually assigned to these roles.

Common Responsibilities of the President

- Provides leadership to the Council.
- Generally, represents the collective voice of Council members.
- Democratically chairs Council and subcommittee meetings, including the Annual Meeting (with the exception of elections to avoid unfairness) and ensures all sides are respectfully heard in an organized manner.
- Together with the Secretary, prepares the agenda for meetings.
- Ensures the agenda is followed.
- Encourages all residents to participate in Residents' Council discussions.
- Does not have voting rights except in the case of a tie.
- Following a meeting, mediates with the home's management team and provides follow-up on concerns before the next scheduled meeting.
- Keeps in touch with other leadership team members, the home's management team, and the general membership of the Council.
- Seeks the support of OARC when needed.
- Appoints subcommittees to achieve particular objectives.
- Possible signing authority on the Residents' Council's bank account.
- Acts as ex-officio (non-voting) member of all subcommittees.

Common Responsibilities of the Vice President

- Assumes the duties of the President in his or her absence.
- Performs other duties as assigned by the President.
- Has voting rights.
- Helps to maintain a democratic process during meetings.
- Delegates tasks, as appropriate.
- Has possible signing authority on the Residents' Council's bank account.

Common Responsibilities of the Secretary

- Has voting rights.
- Ensures people are notified of upcoming meetings.
- Keeps written minutes of important details at the meetings and ensures that the approved minutes are posted.
- Verifies that the intent of the Council meeting discussions is accurately captured in the minutes, as well as any questions the Council would like to raise with the home's management team.
- Attends to any correspondence of the Council, such as mail and newsletters.
- Assists the President with preparing the agenda.
- Has possible signing authority on the Residents' Council's bank account.
- Carries out other duties as assigned by the President.

Common Responsibilities of the Treasurer

- Has voting rights.
- Monitors the Council's finances.
- Keeps all Council funds separate from other funds in the home, whether the Council has its own bank account or not.
- Keeps a simple record of Council funds that are raised and spent.
- Reports the financial status of the Council at meetings.
- Has possible signing authority on the Residents' Council's bank account.
- Reports on the Council's finances for the year at annual meetings.



Sometimes it can be difficult to find a Treasurer for the Residents' Council. Some residents may feel that they need to have a lot of experience in bookkeeping when really it is simply a matter of keeping track of what money comes in and what money gets spent. Anyone who has handled household financial accounts can feel confident that they will make a terrific Acting Treasurer.

Common Responsibilities of Home Area Representatives

- To be a good listener and to encourage discussion among residents.
- To bring concerns and suggestions from the residents in their home area to the general Residents' Council meetings where they can be shared with the group.
- To encourage residents in their home area to get involved in Council activities.
- To help welcome new residents on their home area, provide peer support to enhance their transition to the home and encourage participation in the life of the home.

Shared Responsibilities Among Members of the Board of Directors May Include:

- actively promoting the Residents' Council and its purpose to all residents, staff, volunteers and family members;
- letting all residents know about their Residents' Council and its purpose;
- generating interest in residents to become involved in Council activities;
- maintaining open and regular communication between the Council and its members as well as the home's management team;
- helping subcommittees understand their responsibilities including their accountabilities to regularly report back to the Council;
- keeping accurate documentation of Council activities and records, and ensuring they are available to members;
- posting the names, roles and responsibilities of the leadership team;
- filling a vacancy on your leadership team to temporarily act on behalf of the team, and to support the importance of what they do, until the end of the term; and
- reviewing the Council's Bylaws with the membership, and preparing changes and revisions, if necessary, for approval by the members.



Changes or Vacancies on Your Leadership Team



If someone expresses interest in a role, they may be appointed by the leadership team in an acting capacity until the next election. OARC suggests this provision should be detailed in your Bylaws. You should not feel constricted by the defined election timeframes or terms of service in expressing interest.

It is worth noting that some Councils have experienced challenges with filling vacancies for several different reasons, including a lack of interest among residents to run for a position on the leadership team or a reluctance to take on a specific role with the responsibilities that come along with it. In some cases, Councils have used this as an opportunity to trial or transition to another style of leadership, such as the Shared Leadership model, which may be more appealing to residents who can join a “team” without the formal structure of some of the other leadership models. OARC recommends that once a change of leadership structure is trialled and agreed-upon by the Council, to take the time to update your Council’s guiding document, your Bylaws.

2.10 *Developing Your Residents' Council Bylaws*

Bylaws are designed to provide guidance and direction for the Residents' Council. Having Bylaws in place help to eliminate confusion and promotes consistency in the operations of Council over time including changes in the resident leaders within the home. Bylaws are drafted by the Council's leadership team or founding Planning Committee and can help you create:

- A framework that defines the rights, roles and responsibilities – along with the accepted protocols – for running your Residents' Council.
- The definition of your Residents' Council.
- The purpose of your Residents' Council.
- Goals and objectives of your Residents' Council.
- Clearly defined and mutually agreed upon rules of order and process (how individual members work together as a group or collective voice).
- Continuity for the Council.

Your Bylaws do not have to be complicated or lengthy. Rather, try to strive for simplicity to make it easier for anyone to read and understand.

Residents' Councils that are proactive and prepare their foundational Bylaws early increase the likelihood of dealing with issues consistently, fairly and of eliminating overriding personal interest. Even if a leadership team is not in place, these documents can still be successfully created by a subcommittee of residents.



OARC recommends the Residents' Council Bylaws be reviewed on annual basis. The Residents' Council's leadership team can review and confirm the document or put forward suggested changes to be voted on by the Council as a whole.

Your Bylaws

Bylaws include your Council's own basic principles and rules regarding the operation of your Council. Bylaws need to change to reflect members' needs. Bylaws generally cannot be amended without a majority vote by members. Bylaws vary widely from Council to Council, but generally cover topics, such as how leadership team members are elected, how meetings are conducted, and what are the leadership team's duties.

Information Commonly Outlined in Bylaws:

- Membership and Representation
- Leadership Team Structure; Roles and Responsibilities
- Elections and Terms of Office
- Meeting logistics
- Code of conduct
- Procedure for calling and conducting annual, regular and special meetings.
- Your Council's definition of a quorum (the number of members your Council determines is required for voting to take place and decisions to be valid).
- Process by which votes will take place.
- The chosen reference authority (e.g., *Robert's Rules of Order*) which cites the procedure to be used by your Council, i.e., one person speaks at a time.
- Financial management



CONSIDER INSERTING YOUR COUNCIL'S BYLAWS AT THE END OF
SECTION TWO

Citing a Reference Authority in Your Bylaws

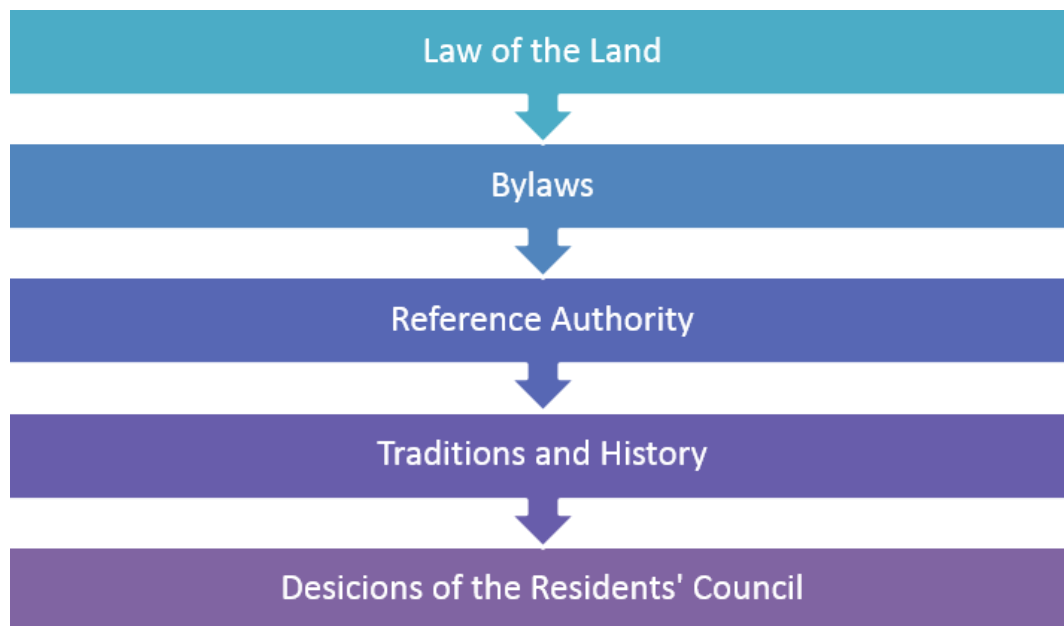
Most Councils cite *Robert's Rules of Order* in their Bylaws. They are a set of rules that can help you run effective meetings and to which members can refer to when necessary. You can familiarize yourself with the full text of this book online by typing the following in your Internet browser: <http://www.rulesonline.com/index.html>.

The Authority System Hierarchy

Generally speaking, there is a system by which rules in any society are ranked. For example, the laws set by Canada surpass Ontario's laws, and provincial laws hold precedence over the policies of companies. Check to make sure that your Council's Constitution and Bylaws do not include any provision that is contrary to the laws that displace it. For instance, a Council should not discriminate on the basis of age, gender or physical ability, to determine who will serve on the leadership team.

If an issue arises that is not covered by the law of the land or Bylaws, your Council will need to consult the chosen Reference Authority named in your Bylaws. If that does not help the current situation, your Council can look to its traditions and history to see what has been done in similar situations. If all else fails, it then falls to the Presidential role in the leadership team, or Subcommittee Chairperson when appropriate, to decide upon a course of action.

The Hierarchy of Rules



Strategies to Consider When Developing Bylaws

1. Call a General Meeting

Because the document(s) must reflect the collective will of members, it is wise to start with a general meeting of all residents to develop objectives for the Residents' Council and to determine the type of structure that will best reflect your members' needs.

2. Form a Subcommittee or Working Group

Form a small subcommittee or working group consisting of interested residents and others who may have expressed a desire to help. The Residents' Council assistant can serve in an advisory/supportive role and help members to work through the process of developing the first draft of their Council's Bylaws. OARC has developed a template to guide you through each step in creating your home-specific-Bylaws.

3. Share the Work

Once formed, residents may volunteer to divide the workload. For example, one resident might review various Reference Authorities to determine which one best suits the Council's purposes. Another resident might brainstorm ideas for a Code of Conduct to be followed during meetings, etc.

4. Review the First Draft

Once a draft is ready, the working group will review it carefully, keeping in mind:

- The effects the rules might have in different situations. Imagine a few "what ifs." Try your rules out in imaginary scenarios.
- Any inconsistencies, ambiguities or language that may be contradictory.
- Some of the questions that might be posed by members.

5. Present the First Draft to Council Members

Once the first draft is completed, it is time to hold a meeting to present the draft to the membership. The working group will want to provide adequate notice to ensure a good turnout. Consider typing, copying and distributing the draft document to all members and other interested parties prior to the meeting, so they can study it and become familiar with the contents. During the meeting, take a moment to work through one article at a time and give the entire membership the opportunity to provide suggestions.



Members of the Bylaw working group will want to take notes and begin the process of writing a second draft if amendments are proposed.

6. Present the Second Draft to Council Members

After writing the second draft, you will want to copy and distribute the document again to all members prior to the next scheduled general meeting. Use the meeting to focus entirely on the review and approval of the Bylaws. Once again, work through each article and hold a vote of approval for each section.

7. Adopting the Council's Bylaws

After adopting the Residents' Council's Bylaws, make a final copy and distribute to each resident member and Residents' Council assistant. Remember to keep a copy in your Residents' Council Minutes Binder. Remember to put aside some time to celebrate your accomplishment! This is a very important milestone for your Council.

Providing for Amendments

Your Council will want to review your Bylaws on an annual basis. Any change to the Bylaws is considered an amendment. This can include the addition of new material, the removal of old material, or changes to wording. An amendment procedure must be included in the Bylaws, because if it is not, the Council cannot make any adjustments, regardless of what may require changing.

The clause or article in the Council's Bylaws which addresses changes to the Bylaws needs to outline the process for amending the basic documents. For example, it might specify that members must have prior written notification of any possible amendments, that these amendments will only be considered at the annual general meeting, and that a majority vote of members present is necessary to implement the proposed change.

A Note on Incorporation

Incorporation is a legal process carried out in accordance with the law of the province or the country. Incorporation clarifies the legal obligations and liabilities of the Council and its leadership team. It may be advisable to incorporate if the Council intends to enter into business contracts or if it will be handling large sums of money; however, it is seldom necessary for a Residents' Council to incorporate. If a Council decides to become a not-for-profit corporation, it is wise to seek legal advice.

Glossary of Terms Used with Bylaws

Absentee Ballot	A vote cast by a person who is unable or unwilling to attend the official polling station. Increasing the ease of access to absentee ballots is seen by many as one way to improve voter turnout.
Associate Members	A special category of members established in the Bylaws of an association to accommodate persons who do not fulfill all the requirements for regular membership. This category can include members of the leadership team who are appointed to committees for liaison purposes. Associate members do not have full voting rights.
Ballot	A written vote.
Board of Directors	A governing body of elected or appointed members who jointly oversee the activities of an organization.
Bylaws	A set of regulations for the internal organization and operation. A Bylaw can only be suspended if a mechanism for this is specifically included in the Bylaws themselves.
Chairperson	A person (a) who is given authority to direct the conduct of a meeting, or (b) who is appointed/elected as the head of a committee.
Consensus	A group decision-making process that seeks the consent, not necessarily agreement about the preferred choice of all members. Consensus is an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the "favorite" of each individual.
Delegate	A person authorized to act as a representative for another.
Ex officio	A non-voting, non-office-holding special membership that is granted to an individual because that person holds another specified office, only for as long as he or she holds that office.
Executive Committee	A subcommittee appointed or elected by the Board of Directors, or by the general membership, which has well defined executive powers, usually spelled out in the Bylaws, and meets frequently to manage the affairs and further the purposes of an organization or entity.
Guest	An individual, identified in the Bylaws, who is permitted to receive notices and attend meetings, but not to vote. An observer does not have to be a member of the organization.



Majority Vote	Approval by a simple majority vote requires 50 per cent plus one. This can be applied to (1) a majority of votes cast, (2) a majority of the quorum, (3) a majority of those present, or (4) a majority of the total membership.
Motion	A proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. In formal meetings motions must be moved by one member and seconded by another member, but the latter is not required in committees. Individual members can (a) call to order, (b) second motions, (c) debate motions, and (d) vote on motions.
Nominating Subcommittee	A standing committee which produces a list of names for election to administrative and committee posts, such that at least one name is put forward for each vacant position.
Organization	A group with accepted relationships, objectives and activities.
Proxy Voting	A form of voting whereby some members of a decision-making body may delegate their voting power to other members of the same body to vote in their absence, and/or to select additional representatives. A person so designated is called a "proxy" and the person designating him or her is called a "principal."
Putting the Question	Placing a motion before a meeting for a decision by vote.
Question	A motion that has been formally moved and seconded but has not been voted upon.
Quorum	A number of members, or a proportion of the membership, that must be present in order to transact business at a meeting.
Regular Member	A category of individual with full participation and voting rights.
Rules of Order	A set of rules, based on democratic parliamentary procedures, which govern the rights of members and the conduct of meetings, committees and elections. The rules allow everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion. Because it is a time-tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings, it can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization.
Scrutineers	A person who, though not necessarily voting members of an organization, are called upon by the Chairperson or Secretary of an organization to assist in the voting process.
Special Meeting	A meeting held at short notice, as defined in the Bylaws, to deal with urgent matters which are specifically listed in the circulated agenda.
Standing Committee	A long-term committee of an organization, the members of which usually serve overlapping terms so that there can be continuity. The functions and structure of these committees are defined in terms of reference approved by the general membership.

Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council



Straw Vote	A vote taken in an informal session to assess the views of members. This vote is non-binding.
Task Force	A committee that investigates a set problem by holding discussions with individuals who support varying viewpoints and by considering alternative solutions, in order to develop specific recommendations for presentation to a parent group.
Two-Thirds Majority Vote	Approval requiring two-thirds of the votes cast, not counting blanks or abstentions.
Unanimous Vote	A vote in which no one indicates opposition to a motion or candidate.

