



## *SECTION 3: SUPPORTING THE OPERATIONS OF YOUR RESIDENTS' COUNCIL*

**For Residents, By Residents**

## SECTION 3

### Inside you will find...

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## *Introduction*

Section 3 will give you a few ideas to take into consideration when looking at different ways to help strengthen and support the effectiveness of your Residents' Council's operations.

We will start by:

- encouraging residents to get involved in their Council;
- exploring some strategies for running an effective Residents' Council meeting;
- understanding how to help residents become more involved in their Council by creating an inclusive Residents' Council that is accessible to everyone;
- identifying the advantages and disadvantages of different table and seating arrangements for meetings;
- examining how to hold a fair election; and
- understanding how to participate in managing your Council's finances.

We have included helpful tools, sample documents and templates in this section which may be used in your home. This guide is also available through the OARC website [www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com). Consider adding your home-specific documents that relate to the topics mentioned in the above list at the end of this section.

Let's get started!

### 3.1 Encouraging Attendance and Participation

One way for residents to become involved in making decisions that influence their experience in their home is to actively participate in their Residents' Council. However, having residents regularly attend a Residents' Council meeting or participate in Council activities appears to be a common challenge.

Together with team members, our Council uses several different ways to remind residents of upcoming Council meetings. Some successful approaches are:

- Posting notices of the next meeting, up to two weeks prior to the meeting, in the dining rooms, lobby, monthly newsletters, calendar and public notice boards.
- Announcing the meeting over the P.A. system in the morning and late afternoon.
- Putting reminders on tables when residents go for breakfast.
- Inviting residents for a tea or coffee to chat about the Council.
- As we speak with residents, we personally remind them that we need their help.

*A resident*



Below are some approaches which you may find helpful in sparking interest as well as encouraging and motivating residents to become involved.

### *Understand What Motivates Residents to Attend and/or Participate*

- Be clear about why your home has a Residents' Council... why it is important for residents to have a regularly scheduled, safe, resident-only meeting time to discuss their experiences among their peers and offer support to one another.
- Residents may be encouraged by the opportunity to meet and build relationships with their peers from all floors/home areas, learn about what is new in their home, and to celebrate with fellow residents.
- Attending a Council meeting may be sparked by a trust that their concerns can be addressed
- Attending a Council meeting may help inspire the feeling that each person is not alone and that they have the opportunity to contribute to increasing the quality of living for all residents.
- If residents perceive the Council as an effective forum for resolving concerns, implementing new ideas and sharing suggestions, they are more likely to return to a meeting. Preparing and distributing a list of accomplishments that occurred because of the Council over the past 6-12 months may provide residents with evidence that Council affects change in their home.
- Residents are more likely to return to future Council meetings if they feel their ideas and suggestions are given serious consideration.

### *Inform New Residents of the Home's Residents' Council*



New residents appreciate being informed about their home's Residents' Council when they first move in. New residents are provided with a Move-In Package (also known as an Admission Package), which includes a description of the Council and any other material the Residents' Council requests be included. You may find that a good Council project is to develop a short,

simply written brochure that explains the Council's purpose, gives the meeting dates, times and location, and lists some of the Council's past achievements or current goals. You may choose to include the names of your Council's leadership team and/or Home



Area Representatives, and Residents' Council assistant and how to contact them. OARC has created a fully customizable template to guide you through the creation of a brochure for the Council, which can be accessed at [www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com). Consider asking your Residents' Council assistant to support you in this process.



### *Link in with another LTC Home in the Area for Guidance and Mutual Support*

Connecting with other long-term care homes within your area or within your home's organization is a great way to learn about what other Residents' Councils are doing and to share some of your own innovative ideas! Consider working with your Residents' Council assistant to make these introductions or contact OARC to help you connect with Residents' Councils.

### *Personally Invite New Residents to Attend and Participate in the Council*



You may wish to visit each new resident to invite them to attend the Council meetings. During this visit, you can explain the purpose of the Council and encourage the new resident to become involved. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about the new resident's interests and past experiences. At this time consider offering to accompany the new resident to the next Council meeting or to arrange for another member to do so. It may be helpful to bring along a copy of your Residents' Council brochure to share with the resident, as well as a copy of the Residents' Bill of Rights. This resource can be printed from the OARC website ([www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com)) and is available in over fifteen language translations.

These "welcome" visits with new residents might also be made by a resident on a Council subcommittee, e.g., Welcoming Subcommittee member. If there are no residents available to visit new residents, the Residents' Council assistant can take on the responsibility, if requested.

### *Identify Issues of Interest to Residents*

You will find that residents are more likely to be involved when the Residents' Council is considering issues that are important to them. One way of ensuring your Council is striving to serve residents' needs is to learn more about residents' concerns, ideas and interests. Consider having Council



members try the following to learn more about what matters to residents:

- Schedule regular social conversations with residents to get to know them better.
- Hold an open forum where residents can share their concerns and what they find important.
- Ask for concerns and suggestions at monthly Council meetings or local meetings with Home Area Representatives.
- Ask the home's management team to discuss concerns that have been brought forward to them and the action plans that have been implemented to address the concerns.
- Encourage residents to speak with Council members directly or to share their thoughts via some other means that may be more convenient for them.
- Review all resident issues of concern.
- Encourage residents to use suggestion boxes, if your home uses these.
- Distribute a questionnaire that asks residents to list concerns and to offer suggestions for addressing them, or to share suggestions of what they would like to see improved in their home.



### *Follow Up and Close the Loop!*

Once you have identified some key topics and areas of interest to residents in the home, be sure to work with the Residents' Council leadership team to include them as discussion topics on your meeting agendas for an upcoming Council meeting. You may consider extending invitations to a members of the home's management team to attend as a guest in order to address specific questions the residents have regarding a particular topic. This process of following up and closing the communication loop helps to reassure residents that when they bring ideas or concerns forward, they will be taken seriously



## 3.2 *Running an Effective Residents' Council Meeting*

### Planning the Meeting

Residents' Council meetings are for residents by residents. Running a successful meeting takes planning and teamwork. Certain details should be addressed during planning to ensure the Council achieves each meeting's objectives. Everything, from choosing guest speakers to protecting time to strengthen relationships, needs to be thought out in advance. You do not have to undertake all of these responsibilities alone. Consider collecting ideas from residents. What approaches would you use? A suggestion would be to have locations in your home (e.g., a binder or suggestion box on each floor or home area) where residents can anonymously write their ideas for possible discussion at the next meeting? One other suggestion would be for your leadership team and Home Area Representatives to collect ideas from discussions around dining room tables and bring them to the next Council meeting. Can you think of residents or team members who might be willing and able to help?



Based on feedback from residents we have spoken with, Councils are encouraged to have meetings that run approximately **one hour in length**, bearing in mind that time may need to be adjusted for greater resident engagement.

#### *Establish a Scheduled Meeting Time and Place*

Consider setting up a meeting schedule for the entire calendar year and publicizing it broadly in the home to ensure that everyone in the home (all team members from all departments) know when the Residents' Council meets. This will help to ensure that residents are made aware in advance, and team members can be flexible with care routines and help encourage/assist residents to participate. Perhaps the day before and the day of the meeting, you can remind residents of the meeting time and place. Different ways to jog someone's memory about upcoming Council meetings include: a warm personal invitation; mentioning the meeting at morning report so team members in all departments are aware; posting the information on calendars; placing reminder cards in a noticeable spot on dining room tables; and having a morning announcement about the meeting on the PA system (if applicable). What would work best in your home?

When establishing your meeting time and schedule, be sure to get resident input. Are morning or afternoon meetings preferred by the majority of residents? You may need to

use trial and error and adjust your meeting schedule over time to meet the changing needs and preferences of residents in the home. Be sure to communicate your schedule to the home's management team and Programs Department, to ensure that conflicting/competing meetings are not booked at the same timeslot as the reoccurring Council meeting.

### *Have Meetings Start and End on Time*

It is safe to say that people appreciate having meetings start and end on time; however, it is also important to have some flexibility. You may need to:

- Be prepared to manage the meeting; for example, the flow of the conversation, as well as any tricky situation that may either limit covering all the items planned on the agenda or cause the meeting to run longer than expected (see *Extraordinary Group Facilitators* on page 105 for specific examples and approaches).
- Accept that all items on the agenda might not get addressed. The topics should be viewed as a guideline. If you run out of time, consider deferring the item until the next meeting or re-invite any speakers to the following meeting.
- Keep the conversation moving forward so that people do not get cut off just when the time indicates the meeting is drawing to a close.

### *Creating A Safe Place Where Residents Feel Comfortable Participating*

Effectively facilitating a meeting requires you to create an atmosphere of trust where members feel safe to express themselves and support each other. Members tend to have greater engagement within their Council meetings. Encouraging everyone to participate in a comfortable setting will help you achieve the best possible outcome for all. The Chairperson/Staff Assistant can help cultivate a comfortable gathering place for fellowship by:

- Hosting meetings in a space that ensures a degree of privacy, i.e., a room with a door that can be closed.
- Introducing new members prior to each meeting, so that people feel welcomed and accepted.
- Reminding members, on occasion when needed, what the Council is and the structure of the meetings.
- Trying icebreakers at the beginning of your meeting to create a connected and comfortable space for sharing and to help ease people into the group.



- Extending a genuine warm welcome to everyone and a “thank you” for participating.
- Creating and reading *Opening Guidelines* at the beginning of the meeting and *Closing Remarks* at the conclusion of the meeting (tool available on the OARC website [www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com)). These statements are helpful in setting the tone of each meeting and laying some courteous instructions that frame the way residents communicate with each other.
- Asking questions to encourage discussion.
- Offering an equal opportunity to people who wish to speak.

### Preparing an Effective Meeting Agenda

Your agenda is simply a list of the topics to be discussed and the order in which they will be discussed. Preparing an agenda in advance of your Council's meeting will help you feel confident that your meetings are organized. Since a Residents' Council meeting is for residents by residents, any effort made in capturing discussion items directly from residents is important. Please consider placing a binder or suggestion box on each floor or home area. Members find it quite helpful to know in advance what topics will be covered.

You can post the agenda beforehand, hand out copies to those present at the meeting, and/or review the agenda at the start of the meeting. Some Councils have even gone “paperless” and project their agenda on a screen or Smart TV during their meetings, instead of printing and distributing hardcopies. Your Council can decide what will work best for your group for communicating agenda items.

Before the agenda is adopted (which is usually the first item of business at each meeting), it is considered to be a provisional agenda. This permits items of business that come up at the last minute to be included at the time of the meeting. After the agenda is adopted, discussions are limited to the items included in the agenda.

Preparing the agenda involves not only indicating the objective(s) of the meeting, but also deciding on the topics you would like to address with the Council's members and determining who will be responsible for presenting or discussing any particular agenda item.

What agenda items do you feel will generate lots of interest, questions, or discussion at your next Council meeting?



OARC has developed a Provisional Agenda that includes all areas allowed for in the FLTCA and are included as possible discussion items for resident dialogue or involvement in their home. OARC suggests using this agenda and the Residents' Council Minute Template, to ensure residents are aware of all the possible topic areas to be covered. Agendas can vary but here are some suggestions that many Councils find useful to include at some or all of their meetings:

1. Call the meeting to order.
2. Welcome and Introductions – People are welcomed at meetings and encouraged to participate. This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce new residents. You may find it useful to briefly review the purposes of your Council.
3. Reading the minutes from the last meeting – It is important to inform absent members and remind all others about what has happened at previous meetings.
4. Leadership Team Reports.
5. Subcommittee and Home Area Representative Reports – The Subcommittee Chairperson typically reports for their group. Reports can be a simple outline of their activities since the last meeting.
6. Old Business – This agenda item allows the Council to deal with issues that have been raised at previous meetings and that require further discussion or follow-up. Discussing old business ensures continuity between Council meetings. There might be some issues that will take several meetings to deal with or will need on-going attention.
7. New Business – This part of the agenda allows the Council to deal with any new issues, problems, ideas, or suggestions members would like to raise. The issues raised during this part of the agenda will take up more time because the issues must be explored, different points of view discussed, and next steps decided on, including who will take on what actions by a particular deadline. Issues that deserve attention but are too complicated to deal with during the meeting's time limitations, can be handled through a subcommittee, by tabling the issue until the next meeting, or through any other viable alternative.
8. Announcements – Allow some time for sharing news and information such as upcoming events.
9. Adjournment – If there is no further business, the Chairperson can now call for a Motion to Adjourn. Prior to voting on the motion, it is advisable to let everyone know the date and time of the next meeting and to record this in the minutes.

### *Qualities You Would Like to See in Your Agenda*

When developing your agenda, make sure it lets residents know the date, location and time of the Residents' Council meeting. We have seen some agendas which also indicate the goal of the particular meeting; for example, to vote on a new leadership team or to amend the Bylaws.



If someone requests an agenda item, consider asking them to contact you a few days prior to the meeting with the topic they would like to speak about and the amount of time they will need for their presentation. Additional agenda items are typically addressed when the Council discusses the New Business section of their agenda.

Agenda items are often summarized in a table format with common headings, such as "Agenda Item," "Presenter" and "Time" (minutes). You may find your meetings to be more focused if each agenda item is directly related to any goals you have set for the particular meeting. If a request is made to add an agenda item that is not directly related to the goals of the meeting, you will want to recommend that the item be discussed at another meeting.

Think about how much time is realistic to allocate to each agenda item so the presenter does not have to rush through the subject matter. You also do not want to force an unrealistic number of agenda items into an hour meeting. A few days prior to the meeting, you may want to ask the presenters if they are happy with the order in which they will be speaking and the amount of time they have been given.

Once you are satisfied with the provisional agenda, you will want to post it in a prominent location in your home at least one week before the meeting with a reminder of the meeting goals, location, start time and length of the meeting.



OARC has a resource entitled "Provisional Agenda" that leads you through all areas of the legislation. This is found on the OARC website: <http://www.ontarc.com/education-support/tools.html#agenda>

CONSIDER INSERTING A SAMPLE OF YOUR COUNCIL'S AGENDA  
AT THE END OF SECTION THREE

## Recording Your Meetings' Minutes

Minutes provide your Council with a written record of your meetings. Minutes can be used to inform residents who were unable to attend of the Council's concerns, activities and accomplishments. It also helps everyone understand what occurred at that meeting. Minutes are also useful to document and track the length of time complaints remain unresolved, as well as any relevant follow-up. Approved meeting minutes, once posted/distributed may also help make other stakeholders, including Family Council, aware of some of the Residents' Council efforts and priorities.

For many Councils, the person serving as Secretary or Residents' Council assistant/Recording Secretary records the minutes and then reads them at the next meeting. After the minutes are read, it is customary to ask members for a "Motion to Accept" the minutes as read which serves to confirm that everyone agrees that the minutes accurately reflect what was discussed during the previous meeting, as well as what people agreed to and any decisions that were made.

Minutes can be as simple or as detailed as your Council prefers. A good rule of thumb is to briefly cover the issues discussed and the actions the Council decides to take. You will want to write down enough detail so that no important information is left out. For example:

"It was moved by Mrs. Walker, seconded by Mr. Soumbos, and carried, that the Treasurer's Report, which shows a balance of \$718.22 on January 31, 2015, be adopted."

or

"It was moved, seconded and carried that the Treasurer's Report be adopted."

At a minimum, you will want your minutes to contain a record of decisions reached and voted upon by your Council. You may wish to ask members if the minutes should or should not show the name of persons making and seconding a motion. The Council might also want the Secretary or Residents' Council assistant/Recording Secretary to include more details of discussions that took place, especially if there were different points of view expressed. When recording minutes, it is not necessary to write all of the details. It is more important to capture the intent of the discussion.



OARC suggests that the person recording the minutes pause from time-to-time in order to ask Council member(s), “I heard you say ...” or “Is this correct?” or, “I’ve written \_\_\_\_\_. Is that how you would like this discussion reflected in the minutes?” This technique may be particularly helpful if the issue being discussed is emotional, controversial or sensitive in nature.

If your Council prefers to record the names of those moving and seconding motions, you should encourage each person to state their name before speaking. Some secretaries find a tape recorder (or similar device) is helpful to accurately record the minutes and capture the intent of the discussion. Details surrounding the use of a tape recorder are approved by Council members. For example, the purpose of the recorder is to aid the secretary in accurately reflecting the discussions at the meeting. Once minutes have been approved by Council members, the recorded meeting will be erased from the device.

Some Secretaries also find it quite helpful if people, such as the Subcommittee Chairperson, present brief written reports that can be received and attached to the minutes as Appendices. For example:

“TREASURER’S REPORT: Members agreed to accept the Treasurer’s report, which is attached as Appendix A.”



CONSIDER INSERTING A SAMPLE OF YOUR COUNCIL’S MINUTES  
AT THE END OF SECTION THREE



## Chairing a Residents' Council Meeting



We felt it important to reiterate that the Residents' Council assistant's role is to assist the Council in any way the Council deems necessary. Oftentimes it is the Residents' Council assistant who performs the facilitation task of the meeting. The main role of the Chairperson/Residents' Council assistant is to guide the Council in the process and flow of its discussions and decision-making. There is no standard

technique or set of inborn talents associated with facilitating meaningful dialogue among members.

During meetings, it is important for the Chairperson to be open to all ideas and perspectives, to trust in the wisdom and experiences of each Council member, and to focus on the Council's strengths. As a facilitator, the Chairperson needs to have confidence in the team and bring out the best in every member so that the Council works effectively together; this inevitably fosters a culture of inclusiveness and positive, mutual support in the home.

Every Council meeting presents different facilitation challenges and the Chairperson will need to rely upon different skills and approaches depending on whether a wide range of ideas need to be generated and explored, a problem solved or a difficult decision made, or whether the matter before the Council is new or familiar. Members of the Council's leadership team are advised to encourage and support each other during challenging times and to seek help if desired.

### *Preparing for Meetings*

The Council Chairperson comes to the meeting well prepared. This often requires:

- Preparing or reviewing the agenda in consultation with the person serving as Vice President and other members of the Council's leadership team.
- Identifying time guidelines for each agenda item, in part to balance the length of reporting and discussions.
- Determining whether an agenda item is tied to an existing internal policy of the home or a provincial legislative requirement.



- Contacting other leadership team members to have them present an agenda item or lead a discussion.

### *Setting the Meeting Climate and Goals*

Some Councils have a personal “check in” at the start of each meeting where each member speaks quite casually and briefly about how they are feeling about attending the meeting, or how they are feeling in general. Larger Councils or meetings with a full agenda may not allow for enough time to incorporate this activity. At the outset of each meeting, the Chairperson may find it helpful to reinforce the importance of the Council, the meetings, the value of members’ participation, and the matters before the group. The inherent value your Council brings to your home cannot be overstated. The Chairperson can help cultivate a climate of cooperative solidarity in the meeting so that everyone feels comfortable sharing by:

- Welcoming everyone who is able to attend.
- Initiating a round of introductions (or a check-in) if new residents are present or if the group is still getting to know one another.
- Reviewing the agenda and time guidelines so everyone can anticipate how the meeting will flow.
- Modify the agenda if required to accommodate people who would like to present a new topic for discussion.
- Reminding the group of the meeting ground rules to reinforce shared expectations of mutual respect.
- Reminding the group that the Council is honoured to speak on behalf of everyone living in the home, so keeping those in mind who cannot speak for themselves is imperative

### *Encouraging Full Participation and Open Discussion*

There are times in almost every meeting when the Chairperson will want everyone to feel comfortable participating in meaningful conversations, particularly when considering a major decision where it is important for members to contribute an uninhibited flow of ideas and concerns about an issue. Consider experimenting with framing those discussions by:

- Asking about the specific result or outcome that members hope for.
- Asking everyone to list the benefits and risks, hopes and fears, or opportunities and challenges that they can think of in relation to a particular idea.



- Trying a round of brainstorming where everyone can feel safe contributing to the conversation without judgement.
- Conducting a “go around the room” to provide members with an opportunity to speak briefly about the item being explored. You can decide if it is helpful to have someone act as a timekeeper so that everyone has the option to contribute.

### *Guiding a Focused Conversation*

Sometimes your Council's conversation may need to be focused in order to move the group towards a decision. The Chairperson may find it quite helpful to:

- Highlight why the group has been asked to discuss a particular agenda item, i.e., to make a decision, to share information, to share and discuss ideas, to identify a plan of action, etc.
- Set time limits on how long individuals speak for or the total length of time for a group discussion.
- Summarize the group discussion before moving on to the next agenda item.
- Offer a clear question to be answered by members which will help direct everyone's attention to one issue.
- Call for a concluding “go around the room” by the group to gather final thoughts and signal the end of discussing an agenda item.

### *Ensuring That All Viewpoints Are Heard*

Feeling welcome to actively participate in Council meetings is rooted in a comfortable gathering place where the leadership team strives to have all points of discussion and voices heard. Part of the Chairperson's role is to ensure that no one voice dominates the rest and that all perspectives are brought to bear on important decisions. Some Councils have implemented a physically-tangible “talking stick” as a tool for meetings. The “stick” is to be passed around the room, allowing each resident the opportunity to speak and share without interruption. To make it easier to unearth the collective wisdom and experience of Council members, consider:

- Asking if other members feel differently about an issue and remind the Council that the meeting is a safe and supportive environment to honestly share thoughts and feelings. Often, if there is one such perspective, there are likely others that need to be honoured.
- Asking if there is anyone else who has reservations.



- Exploring the different viewpoints and trying to learn more about the underlying reasons for the different perspectives.

You may find that there are times during these discoveries when you might need to discourage people from judging how others feel or what they believe. The Chairperson may feel reassured by drawing on the positive support of their peers that will help to encourage a space for optimal sharing.

### *Summarizing, Evaluating and Closing a Meeting*

The end of a meeting is just as important as the beginning. How members feel about the meeting will influence their decision to return to the next one. *Summarizing* is an important skill to be exercised throughout meetings and particularly at the end. The Chairperson may choose to close by:

- Acknowledging any work done or any accomplishments since the last meeting.
- Summarizing major decisions and activities/tasks/actions to be accomplished, as well as who is responsible for completing them.
- Assessing the meeting by asking everyone what went well and how the Council's leadership team could improve future meetings. This is a wonderful way to demonstrate leadership team responsiveness to feedback from residents.

### 3.3 Extraordinary Group Facilitators

#### The Five Qualities of an Extraordinary Group Facilitator

- They are present and grounded.
- Have knowledge of what makes groups work.
- Lead with a light touch.
- Use a strengths-based and shared leadership approach.
- Create and nurture a safe place for group members to express and embrace their differences.

Becoming an extraordinary group facilitator is something that anyone can learn. It is a skill that if nurtured and intentionally encouraged, will grow.

#### How to Deal with the Roles That People Adopt in Groups

##### *The Storyteller (aka The Monopolizer)*

This is the person who believes that they are being called on to give a lengthy recitation about their life, their past, their present. Why is this a problem?

- The over-talkative member uses up so much “airtime” that other members may give up trying to participate.
- Quiet members can find them a blessing in disguise... it means they are off the hook and can remain quiet and remote.
- Over time this often produces frustration and irritation in the other group members, and they may leave the group.

##### *How do extraordinary group facilitators deal with this?*

- Gatekeeping – opening the gate and letting others in. How do you do this? Give positive feedback and then include others: e.g. “Thank you Mary, for sharing this, what an interesting life you have led!” While they are basking in the praise say this, “I seem to remember John grew up in Saskatchewan too.” Then physically turn to another group member and ask for their input.



- Sit beside the group member you know is a storyteller. From this position you can give non-verbal cues to the storyteller to help regulate their input from a place of being *with* him/her, rather than *against* him/her. For example: a light touch on the arm to point to the person who is speaking.

### *The Quiet One (aka The Non-Participant?)*

There are many reasons why group members may be quiet. Sometimes it is simply that they are learning by listening, sometimes it is because they are afraid of judgement by others, ....or it can be because of ethnic differences – speaking openly about personal issues is not congruent with culture beliefs.

*How do extraordinary group facilitators deal with this?*

- Make eye contact... people are much more likely to talk if another person is looking directly at them.
- Ask for their agreement with whatever is being discussed. It is a simple question that can be answered yes or no.
- Ask for their opinion on a topic.

### *The Finder-of-Challenges (aka The Complainer)*

People who are finders-of-challenges find fault in everything. Their complaints are often accompanied by a suggestion that someone (probably you) should do something about the problem. Now.

*How do extraordinary group facilitators deal with this?*

- Listen and acknowledge. Let them know they have been heard. However, acknowledge does not mean agree, it simply means acknowledge.
- Help them to quickly move into problem solving – where can they take the issue to get some help with it.
- Invite them to talk after the group is over so the problem can get handled.

\* Part 2 of Extraordinary Group Facilitators is available through Java Group Programs, Inc.  
Used with permission by the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils

## A Guide to Arranging Tables and Seating

Here is a helpful guide to arranging tables and chairs for your meeting. Consider arranging the room to suit the nature of your meeting, the number of participants and the objectives you want to achieve.

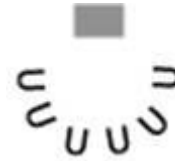


OARC recommends the following arrangements for optimal sharing during your meeting; however, other styles may work better in your setting.

### Circle or Semi-Circle

#### Description and Set-up Hints

This layout style is often used for discussion groups where there is a speaker, audio-visual presentation or other focal point.



where there

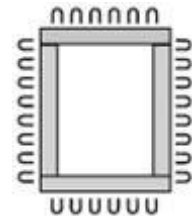
#### Advantages

- Can be setup with or without tables.
- Excellent for sharing and interacting as everyone is able to see each other's face and have eye contact.
- Promotes a sense of equality and informality.

### Hollow Square

#### Description and Set-up Hints

Square conference tables can be arranged in a closed or horseshoe type square, rectangle or even octagon—depending on the size of the group and of the room—leaving the center open. Chairs are placed around the outside of the tables. Ideal for groups of 30 or less.



#### Advantages

- Excellent for the group leader/leadership team. Facilitates the exchange of messages and information with everyone being able to see and hear each other.
- Useful layout design that provides workspace for each person
- Because there is face-to-face contact, the members are encouraged to interact with each other and to participate in the activities.

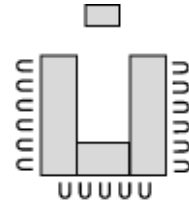
#### Disadvantages

Awkward for the use of visuals.

## U-Shape

### Description and Set-up Hints

This style of seating consists of three tables in a U-shape with the choice of a focal point at the front. Participants are seated around the shape facing each other, but there is a space between the tables that can be used for presentations.



### Advantages

- Good work space.
- Encourages collaboration and interaction among participants.
- Ideal when audio-visual or speakers are involved.
- Center area can be used for simulations and role play.

### Disadvantages

Not ideal for groups larger than 25 people as the sides of the “U” become too long and may not promote participation from all attendees.

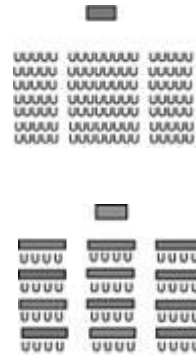


OARC suggests that the following arrangements be avoided if possible because they do not tend to create an environment for optimal sharing.

## Theater or Classroom Style

### Description and Set-up Hints

This style accommodates smaller audiences. Chairs in rows face a focal point, such as a stage area, head table or speaker (with no conference table). Rows can be circular, semi-circular, straight or angled towards the focal point and can involve some combination of desks and chairs arranged in rows facing a focus area. If tables extend beyond the stage or podium, it is best to angle them towards the speaker. Consider offsetting each row so that residents do not have to look over the person in front of them (this will increase the space required). If you wish to accommodate large audiences who have come to see or hear a speaker, this is a suitable room set-up.



### Advantages

- This is a very flexible and comfortable room set-up and accommodates large groups in less space.
- The presenter can see all participants.
- When using tables, ideal for taking notes, meetings requiring multiple handouts or reference materials, or the use of a laptop computer.

### Disadvantages

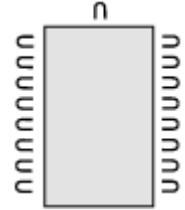
- Can be perceived as hierarchal or formal in nature.
- There is minimal group interaction.
- Does not allow audience participation beyond perhaps questions to the speaker.
- Taking notes is challenging without tables.



## Conference or Boardroom Style

### Description and Set-up Hints

A rectangular or oval table set-up with chairs around all sides and ends. This table layout is often used for Board of Directors meetings, committee meetings, or discussion groups. Standard conference tables can be placed together to form a square, rectangle or hollow square. The larger the set-up, the harder it is for attendees to see others at the end opposite them.



### Advantages

- Provides a good working space and atmosphere for groups of 6 to 15 people.
- Encourages interaction among participants.

### Disadvantages

- Can be perceived as hierarchal or formal in nature.
- Not ideal for more than 15 people because people at the far end of the table may have difficulty being able to interact with their team members or participate in the meeting.
- Not ideal for audio-visual presentations or speakers.

### 3.4 Improving Accessibility



Improving accessibility to Residents' Council meetings and activities offers residents opportunities to fully participate and promotes a positive atmosphere of mutual support which is inclusive of all residents.

If you notice that a resident is having difficulty accessing Council activities and meetings, a good starting point might be to ask, "How can I help you?" Residents are your best source to understand what they may need to get involved with the Council.

#### *Presume Possible*



Be mindful of assuming what a person can or cannot do. Ask them.

## Understanding Challenges with Hearing

There are varying degrees of hearing loss which each person experiences differently. With the intention of maximizing a resident's ability to fully participate in their Council, consider learning more about what individual residents may need to be able to hear what is being said.



### *How to Support Residents Experiencing Challenges with Hearing*

- If a resident uses a hearing aid, ask them what they might need to improve their ability to hear information while they are wearing it; for example, minimizing background noise.
- For larger groups and meeting spaces, consider trialling a microphone (if available) that can be utilized by the speaker/presenter and passed around the room as needed.
- It is often helpful to find a quiet area where you can speak knowing that shouting does not make it easier to hear.
- When setting up the room for Council meetings, if possible, reserve seating close to the Chairperson for residents with hearing challenges.
- You may need to speak a little bit slower or more deliberately.
- Ensure all residents have a copy of the meeting agenda to assist them in following the meeting process and discussions.
- When approaching from behind, think about using a gentle touch on the shoulder or a gentle wave of your hand as you approach to let the person know that you are there.
- Some people who experience difficulty hearing find it easier to see your face and read your lips; therefore, talking in a well-lit area is helpful as is making sure your hands are not covering your face when you are speaking.
- Consider asking if another method of communicating would be simpler; for example, using a pen and paper.

- At some long-term care homes, residents may have access to pocket talkers or other sound amplifier devices that could be borrowed for short-term use during meetings. Consider asking a team member or your Residents' Council assistant to see if this type of tool may be available at your home.

## Understanding Challenges with Speech or Language

Challenges with speech or language may take the form of difficulty pronouncing words, slurring or stuttering, or difficulty expressing oneself or understanding written or spoken language.

### *How to Support Residents Experiencing Challenges with Speech or Language*

- If you do not understand something that is said, you may want to ask the resident to repeat the information.
- It might make communication easier by asking questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no", or in a way that the resident prefers.
- Provide as much time as the resident needs to communicate without being interrupted.



Sometimes the words don't come easily to me. I know what I want to say, but I can't find the words as effortlessly as I used to. I would like people to be patient because I'm really trying and it's embarrassing when someone finishes my sentences for me.

*A resident*

## Acknowledging and Supporting Language Barriers

Many long-term care homes are home to residents of varying ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The resident population and their preferences will often determine whether Residents' Council meetings are facilitated in English or French, or another language preferred by the majority of residents living in the home. In many homes, where there are multiple first languages spoken by residents, perceived communication barriers can occur. It is also helpful to recognize that for some residents living with cognitive changes, if they learned English as a second language later in life, as their shorter-term memories are affected, they may start to revert to speaking the language from their country of origin. This may also contribute to confusion and impact resident participation and understanding at Council meetings.

### *How to Support Residents Experiencing Language Barriers*

- Seek the support of a volunteer who may serve as translator (this reoccurring guest would need to be pre-approved by Council in order to attend meetings)
- A volunteer translator could translate minutes and agendas and spend time reading these documents with residents for whom the language used in Council meetings is foreign
- The Residents' Bill of Rights (FLTA, 2021) is available in 15+ language translations on the OARC website [www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com) – consider printing and sharing this resource.

### *Understanding Challenges with Mobility*

Challenges with mobility may take the form of difficulty with moving, standing or sitting and can change from day-to-day and hour-to-hour. When planning Council meetings or activities, think about ways to remove obstacles or minimize physical discomfort.



### *How to Support Residents Experiencing Challenges with Mobility*

- If you are speaking with someone who uses a walker, wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you both have eye contact.
- Ask permission before touching somebody's assistive devices or equipment.
- Think about how to remove obstacles and rearrange furniture so residents have a clear pathway.

## Understanding Challenges with Vision

There are varying degrees of vision loss which each person experiences differently. Few people with some loss of vision are entirely blind, so it is best to assume the person has some ability to see. With the intention of maximizing a resident's ability to fully participate in their Council, consider asking what individual residents may need to be able to visually experience their environment.

### *How to Support Residents Experiencing Challenges with Vision*

- We suggest contacting CNIB to learn more about the different degrees of vision loss, the tools and equipment that enable a person experiencing challenges with their vision to be as independent as possible, and more ideas about the types of support that may be helpful.
- Because their job requires them to be attentive, when service animals are working, it is best not to touch, distract or address them.
- The person may appreciate being oriented to their environment. Identifying visual, auditory or tactile landmarks seems to be helpful because they are often easier to remember. You may wish to ask the person what they would find helpful.
- Consider using a larger font size in your agendas, minutes, newsletters and other written material to make it easier to read. CNIB recommends a 12-point font size, in an Arial or Verdana typeface.
- If available, consider utilizing a projector or Smart TV to enlarge and display your agenda or other meeting materials on a larger screen format. This may support efforts to go paperless or reduce waste.
- If you are escorting someone to a room, find out where they would prefer to sit. It may be easier for them to see when they are seated in a well-lit area of the room.
- When leaving the side of a person who experiences challenges with their vision, be sure to let them know.



### *3.5 Checklist: Planning a Meeting that Is Accessible to Everyone*

This checklist can serve as an optional courtesy guide to ensure you are providing residents the best opportunity to fully participate in a Council meeting. You may photocopy this checklist and tick the box beside the tasks that you have accomplished.

#### *Choosing the location*

- ☐ Visit the meeting room and check the location for features that may be a potential barrier to residents who wish to attend the meeting.

#### *Invitations and promotional materials*

- ☐ Invitations and promotional material are available in alternate formats for residents who require or request them (i.e., Braille, audiotape, via e-mail, in large print, or other digital formats).
- ☐ Invitations and promotional materials include a note that lets residents flag any additional requirements.

#### *Entrance to the meeting room*

- ☐ The entrance to the meeting room is wide enough for residents using a wheelchair or scooter.
- ☐ The door is easy to open.
- ☐ There are signs in prominent areas of the home that clearly indicate where the meeting is being held.
- ☐ Signs are large enough and clear enough so that residents with low vision can read them.
- ☐ Signs are mounted at a comfortable height so that residents who use wheelchairs or scooters can read them.
- ☐ Team members or volunteers are available to help residents arrive at the meeting on time.
- ☐ There are accessible washrooms located near the meeting room.

#### *Flooring in the meeting room*

- ☐ Floor coverings (such as low pile carpeting, hardwood flooring or tile) will not hinder residents using mobility aids (such as wheelchairs and scooters) to easily move around the room.

### *Meeting room*

- ☐ The meeting room is set up to provide access to all participant seating locations, the speakers' area and refreshments so that people with service animals or who use mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, crutches) can independently enter and exit the room and move throughout the space, sit with other participants, participate as speakers, and get refreshments.
- ☐ A stage or raised platform, if not accessible to all speakers, will not be used.
- ☐ An adjustable-height podium is available for all presenters.
- ☐ Background noise (e.g., ventilation systems, noise from adjacent rooms) which may be distracting is minimized.
- ☐ There is a well-lit space for sign language interpreters, if needed.
- ☐ If the meeting room has windows, there are drapes or blinds that can be used to reduce light or glare.
- ☐ Furniture is arranged away from windows or the windows are covered so that participants, speakers and interpreters are not silhouetted by the natural backlighting, which makes speech-reading difficult.
- ☐ Cables, wires and microphones are well secured and away from aisles and other traffic areas.

### *Refreshment and dietary arrangements*

- ☐ If refreshments are served, there is sufficient floor space for people using a mobility aid to approach the tables.
- ☐ All food, plates, light-weight glasses, bendable straws, utensils and napkins are within reach.
- ☐ If food and beverages will be served, there is a current Dietary report available to the Residents' Council assistant or volunteers that can be respectfully and discreetly used to reference dietary requirements for all residents (allergies, food texture, fluid consistency etc.) to ensure resident health and safety.
- ☐ If beverages are served, sugar-free drinks, juices, water and fluid thickener are available for residents with dietary requirements or concerns.
- ☐ If food is provided buffet style, the Residents' Council assistant or a volunteer will be on hand to help serve residents who have visual and physical disabilities.
- ☐ If pastries and cookies are on the menu, healthy alternative snacks will also be available for residents with dietary requirements or concerns.
- ☐ Wherever possible, make arrangements in advance to provide food offerings in various textures/consistencies for residents with dietary requirements so that no one is left waiting or excluded from eating.





### *Accessible communications*

Making sure information is accessible involves more than just providing alternate formats to print. You will want to consider how you can make verbal presentations available to residents with difficulty hearing.

- ☐ Arrangements have been made for a sign language interpreter and/or real-time captioner to be present at the meeting, if required.
- ☐ The lighting and meeting room furniture is arranged to facilitate communication among participants, interpreters and real-time captioners.
- ☐ Printed materials indicate if they are available in alternative formats and languages, as well as information on how to obtain them from the Council.
- ☐ Handouts are placed at the front edge of the table to make them easier to reach for participants both seated and standing.

### 3.6 Running an Election



The process of nominating and electing members to your Council's leadership team can be quite exciting. Leading up to an election, let us look at some customs for running elections that are commonly used by Residents' Councils across the province, as well as some of the interesting roles and responsibilities of the individuals who will be involved in making your elections a success. As the time comes to seek

nominees for office, anyone who is involved will want to review the procedures for nominations and elections set out in the Council's Bylaws.

#### Nominations

Nominees can often be found by approaching people personally, posting a single nomination form in a central location where names can be put forward, or by circulating individual nomination forms. This is a special opportunity for the Residents' Council assistant to help with recruitment as they may know of residents who are interested in being more involved in your Council. The Residents' Council assistant can put residents in touch with one of the current resident leaders to learn more about the operations of the Council as a whole. You may have other creative ideas for generating a list of potential candidates. Bear in mind that all nominations need to be seconded to show that the candidate has the support of more than one person.

Your Council can nominate candidates in several ways. Choose the approach that works best in your situation:

- a. a Nominating Subcommittee;
- b. by ballot; or
- c. from the floor.

As with any election, the number of nominees is not as important as the fact that people would like to serve, and that the process is democratic.

#### *Getting Nominated*

• • •

Every resident can run in their Council's election.

Every resident can nominate someone who they feel would be a good candidate.

Nominees must formally indicate their willingness to serve on the leadership team.

### *A. Nominating Subcommittee*

When a Residents' Council is being formed, it is common for the Planning Committee to initially find residents who are willing to serve on the new leadership team and, in some homes, residents who regularly attend Council meetings approach their fellow residents to consider joining the core group on the leadership team for the next term. Later in the life of a Council, members may decide to form a Nominating Subcommittee of a few residents and/or team members to take on the responsibility of finding people, either at election time, or when a vacancy occurs. Although a Nominating Subcommittee is not found in every home, it remains the choice of every Council whether they would find such a subcommittee helpful.

Your Bylaws will typically specify the structure of this subcommittee and how its members are chosen. It is common for the larger membership of your Council to elect who will serve on this group. To avoid a conflict of interest, the person serving as the Council's President is often not a member of this subcommittee. Residents serving on the Nominating Subcommittee can be nominated for office.

Should you choose to have one, the main role of your Nominating Subcommittee will be to encourage residents with fresh ideas and a cooperative outlook to consider running in the election, and to find the best candidate for each position on the Council's leadership team

The person currently serving as the Council's Secretary or record-keeper will want to give the subcommittee a copy of the Council's current Bylaws and a description of the duties of each role on the leadership team (if the Council is using the Traditional Executive Structure). The group carefully reviews the information and prepares an initial list of contenders whom they believe to be the best choice to potentially join the leadership team.

A member of the Nominating Subcommittee will then need to meet with the chosen nominees to let them know they were nominated, to confirm if they are willing to serve if elected, and to answer any questions. If a candidate declines, the subcommittee will need to leave that position open for nominations from the floor. It is advisable that no one be nominated without their consent.

Your Bylaws may confirm that additional nominations can be made from the floor at this time. As soon as the subcommittee presents its report, the group is officially disbanded. However, sometimes the subcommittee is revived to make nominations to fill vacancies.



OARC suggests that everyone on the current leadership team participate in discussing how your team will be arranged as soon as possible; for example, the group may choose to have a team with specific titles, such as Secretary. If your Council prefers to not have titles, we recommend using the generic term “leadership team” to describe the entire group of residents elected to oversee the general administration of your Council.

### *B. Nominations by Ballot*

Your Council may choose to take nominations by ballot. In this process, all residents are offered a nominating ballot—which is different from an election ballot—where they can write the name(s) of one or more candidates. Some Councils host a special meeting before the election date where they hand out ballots to residents; however, it is important that people who are not able to attend also have the opportunity to get a ballot.



The person offering the nominating ballot lets residents know more about their Council and who to return the completed ballots to. Some homes put a nomination box on every home area/floor where residents can drop off their ballot. A member of the Nominating Subcommittee counts the ballots and writes a list of the nominees to give to the person serving as President for them to announce. Assistance is commonly given by team members or volunteers who are not involved in the election process if help is needed by a resident to fill out a ballot to reflect their choice.

“Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)  
Minister, Civil Rights Activist

### *C. Nominations from the Floor*

The Chair calls for nominations from the floor. According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, a member may not be recognized by the Chair to make a nomination. In small organizations, nominations are frequently made from their seat. The guidelines for a member nominating a candidate are the same as for the Nominating Subcommittee and it is important to know beforehand if the person they would like to nominate is willing to serve.

When the nomination is from the floor:

- From their seat, a member can call out the name of their recommended candidate.
- No second is required but sometimes one or more members will second a nomination to indicate endorsement.
- A person can nominate themselves.
- A member can be nominated for more than one office (if using a Traditional Executive Structure).
- A member cannot nominate more than one person for an office until everyone has had an equal opportunity to make nominations.
- Nominees do not have to leave the room during nominations, when the vote is taken, or when the vote is counted.
- The presiding officer on the leadership team can continue presiding, even if they are one of the nominees for the office.
- A member can decline the nomination during the nomination process.
- After each nomination, the Residents' Council assistant typically writes the names of each nominee —and sometimes posts their photos—on a large writing surface, such as a whiteboard, and repeats the name of the nominee so that everyone can hear who was recommended.

You may wish to encourage nominees to say a few words about themselves. If at any time during the nominating process a member realizes that they will not be able to serve if elected, they will need to request that their name be removed from the list. Usually the person serving as President closes nominations when no further nominations come forward from the floor.

*"The idea of an election is much more interesting to me than the election itself...  
The act of voting is in itself the defining moment."*

*- Jeff Melvoin*

## Elections by Anonymous Ballot

As the slate of nominees is read aloud at the meeting, many Councils find it helpful to write the names of persons nominated for each office—and sometimes post their photos—on a large writing surface, such as a whiteboard, before election ballots are completed. If help is needed to fill out a ballot, assistance is commonly given by team members or volunteers who are not involved in the election process.



Although this is an exciting process, it can be quite sensitive in nature because there is a potential for the self-esteem of nominees to be affected by the outcome. Some residents may feel hurt or discouraged if they are not elected. Because of this, OARC discourages voting through a show of hands and recommends keeping the process of counting ballots confidential, i.e., not letting anyone know how many votes each nominee received.



When all election ballots are cast, the scrutineers—often a resident who is not nominated for office along with your home's Residents' Council Assistant or another person pre-approved by the Council, —distribute and collect the ballots, count the votes cast for each candidate, and report results to the person serving as the Council's President. To maintain confidentiality and the integrity of your election process while charged with serving as an election official, you may wish to have your scrutineers sign a statement of confidentiality. Their written agreement can be stapled to the ballots and kept in a secure place as a formal record of proceedings until the next election period.

Only the names of the newly elected leadership team are announced, with the successful candidate being the person who receives the majority (50 per cent plus one) of votes cast. The results are then announced by the Chairperson of the Nominating Subcommittee, with appreciation expressed to all nominees for their willingness to support the Council as a leadership team member. The Chairperson may want to consider taking this opportunity to let everyone know how they can continue to support the Council as a part of the larger membership by getting involved in activities, cultivating a supportive environment to live in, and participating in Council meetings.

With the start of a new term of office, consider opportunities to coach and support your new leadership team members so that they can quickly feel comfortable in carrying out their responsibilities. When the election has finished, you will want to publish the names and post the photographs of your new leadership team for all residents to recognize as their new

Residents' Council leadership team along with a description of how to contact them. A further consideration would be a brief summary of the goals and objectives of your leadership team.

### Election Guidance for a Shared Leadership Team Structure

It is worth noting that the election process might look slightly different for Residents' Council groups that have adopted a Shared Leadership Team structure, as opposed to a Traditional Executive Model with only 4 office positions to be filled (refer to pages 70-71 for a refresher on the various leadership team models). In many ways, the Shared Leadership Team model can be considered more inclusive because it allows more residents to be involved in meaningful ways that align with individual strengths and interests. Instead of dividing the work of a Council into defined roles with set responsibilities, the work is shared amongst the team. Ultimately your Council will decide how many residents will be part of a Shared Leadership Team. This number may vary according to the size of your home and the level of interest expressed by the residents. As a general rule of thumb, 4-8 resident leaders is a good range to stick to when forming your leadership team. When it comes to elections, your Council will follow the nomination process outlined earlier in this section, however, the number of nominated leaders may determine whether a formal election with ballots is warranted. There may be no need for an election i.e. if the Council has decided that the leadership team will consist of 6 people, and 6 people have been nominated, there is no election. In this situation, there is an election by acclamation which means that each person is automatically part of the Shared Leadership Team.

### Selecting (and Electing) Your Home Area Representatives

By introducing the roles of Home Area Representatives as an extension of your Residents' Council leadership team, Councils are in a better position to represent the collective voice of residents living throughout the long-term care home. In some homes, the elected resident leaders may coincidentally live on the same floor or home area. Home Area Representative positions help to ensure that resident perspectives from every floor or home area are recognized and brought forward at the general Residents' Council meeting each month.

It is up to the individual Council to determine how the Home Area Representatives will be identified. You may choose to formalize your process and use the nomination steps outlined earlier in this section. Alternatively, residents may be approached or volunteer to assume the role of Home Area Representative. If there is substantial interest in these positions, an election with ballot system may be warranted, however, it is also acceptable for nominees to be automatically be placed into the roles if there are only one or two residents interested in representing their respective areas. This process is known as an election by acclamation. OARC recommends that Councils select at least 2 Home Area Representatives from each area



of the home. This way, if one person is unable to attend the general Council meeting, there is still another individual who can share an update/report from their respective floor or home area.

Our election process is very simple. We allow all residents the opportunity to vote and think of who they would like to run in office. We just started this process last year. Prior to that, residents just did a show of hands on the day of the election. Now...

1. We do up a notice to be placed on all boards, in the dining room, lobby, activation rooms, and wherever we feel we can post notices.
2. We announce the people that were previously in office at the November meeting to allow people to think about it.
3. At the December meeting, we ask if anyone has thought about the elections and if anyone would like the opportunity to run.
4. After the December meeting, we post again asking for nominations and to hand all nominations into the Programs & Services Supervisor to hold until the day of the elections.
5. On the day of the election, the Program & Service Supervisor writes names on the board of all the people nominated for the officers.
6. Beside each name, a star is placed and then residents that are running are asked if they are willing to be satisfied to carry out those duties.
7. At that time, the Program & Service Supervisor announces each of the positions in the Council.
8. At that time, nominated residents are asked to sign the acceptance form.
9. The Program & Service Supervisor announces the name of each nominated resident who ends up having the most votes for each leadership team position:
  - a. President
  - b. Vice President
  - c. Secretary
  - d. Treasurer

We run our Residents' Council for a term of three years as passed through one of our Council meetings.

*A resident*





### ***3.7 Checklist: Nomination and Election Procedures***

#### **Planning**

- ☐ Ask residents if they know of anyone they believe would make a good candidate for the Council's leadership team.
- ☐ Review the rules and procedures for nominations and elections as set out in the Bylaws or past minutes, keeping in mind that elections must be conducted in accordance with provisions of your Council's Bylaws document.
- ☐ Discuss the specific election duties that will need to be carried out and determine who will assume particular responsibilities.
- ☐ The Nominating Subcommittee (if applicable) will want to contact current leadership team members to better understand how the most recent election was conducted and if any problems occurred. The committee may find it helpful to obtain copies of prior publications, ballots, tally sheets and other records to use as templates in the upcoming election.
- ☐ Agree upon a date to close nominations and for the election.
- ☐ Consider developing a simple schedule which provides adequate time to complete each stage of the election.
- ☐ Select a polling site(s) and schedule polling hours to provide all residents with an opportunity to vote or do this at a regularly scheduled or election-specific Council meeting.
- ☐ Create and photocopy/print as many nomination forms as required.

#### **Nominations**

- ☐ Let everyone know that your Residents' Council will be holding an election for its leadership team.
- ☐ Consider publishing and posting the titles and duties of each officer (if using the Traditional Executive leadership team structure), as well as the date, time and location(s) for submitting nominations. Allow enough time for candidates to be suggested. You may wish to indicate: the length of term of office; instructions for

making, seconding, and accepting nominations; and eligibility requirements for candidates and nominators.

- ☐ Home Area Representatives can assist by notifying residents who might not otherwise know of the upcoming election, so they can have an equal opportunity to put somebody's name forward for a position on the Council's leadership team.
- ☐ Make sure that the Residents' Council assistant or member of your Nominating Subcommittee visits each potential nominee to determine if they would be willing to accept the position for which they have been nominated.
- ☐ Keep an accurate record of all submitted nominations. You may choose to include the names of who nominated each candidate, as well as the nominees and positions for which they were recommended.

## Preparing for Elections

- ☐ Regularly remind residents of the upcoming election by way of ongoing notices (posters, newsletter articles etc.) or during casual conversation.
- ☐ Consider publishing and posting an election notice that specifies the positions to be filled and the date, time and location of the election. You may wish to indicate the length of term of office, instructions on the voting procedure, voter eligibility requirements, and information regarding absentee balloting.
- ☐ Consider arranging for extra help from team members or volunteers on the day of your elections to help residents come to the meeting to vote and to help with marking ballots to reflect the resident's choice.
- ☐ Consider arranging for a microphone.
- ☐ Consider arranging for a large writing surface (i.e., a flipchart, blackboard or whiteboard) on which the names of nominees for each office can be written.
- ☐ Arrange ballots to be printed and counted before members vote. Check the ballot carefully to make sure it is accurate.
- ☐ Safeguard all ballots to maintain the integrity of the process.
- ☐ Plan for the tally of ballots (can be two residents or one resident along with one volunteer/team member) and determine the counting and voiding procedures to be used if this is not already indicated in your Bylaws.
- ☐ Prepare tally sheets to be used at the ballot count.

## Elections Procedures

- ☐ Ensure that you have enough supplies (including ballots, pencils, etc.) for people to vote.
- ☐ If you are using a ballot box, confirm that it is empty and seal it in the presence of observers before the polls open.
- ☐ Read aloud the list of nominees for each position at the meeting.
- ☐ Provide a replacement election ballot to any member who spoils a ballot while voting. Maintain custody of all spoiled ballots and account for them at the completion of the ballot tally.
- ☐ If some residents need help in filling out their ballots, this assistance is best offered by team members or volunteers who are not involved in the election process.
- ☐ If a resident is ill, a volunteer may bring a ballot to the resident to complete and then place in a sealed envelope to include in the final ballot tally.

## Ballot Tally

- ☐ Begin the ballot tally only after you close the polls.
- ☐ If using a ballot box, open the ballot box in the presence of observers.
- ☐ Sort and count the ballots after all are submitted. It is common for the ballot counters to be at least two or three independent people, not eligible for office (can be a combination of a resident along with the Residents' Council assistant or Home Administrator).
- ☐ Allow observers to watch the counting and other related activities closely enough to verify the accuracy of the tally. However, you will not want observers to handle the ballots.
- ☐ Attempt to resolve any challenged ballots at the start of the tally.
- ☐ Count the votes on each ballot and enter the results on tally sheets.
- ☐ Announce the tally results for each candidate.

## Post-Election Activity

- ☐ The Nominating Subcommittee (if applicable) will want to present the election results as soon as possible, and may wish to consider publishing and posting the names and photographs of those recently elected to the Council's leadership team, i.e., in your home's newsletter.
- ☐ The Nominating Subcommittee may wish to maintain all nomination and election records for at least one year.
- ☐ New leadership team members assume their Council duties and responsibilities, preferably with mentorship from exiting members.
- ☐ Evaluate your process and make notes for the next election while it is fresh. Think about what worked well and what changes you would suggest be made for the next election. You will want to record this in your next Council's meeting minutes.



CONSIDER INSERTING A COPY OF YOUR COUNCIL'S NOMINATION FORM AND SAMPLE BALLOT AT THE END OF SECTION THREE

### 3.8 Participating in Managing Your Council's Finances

#### Choosing a Bank

One of the rights and roles of your Residents' Council is to sponsor and plan activities in your home. This process infers that you have access to funds. From time to time, your Council may also want to access funds to purchase special items (as approved by the Residents' Council). Your Council may wish to open a separate bank account in the name of your Residents' Council or you may wish to maintain a petty cash float, depending on the policies in your home which govern how petty cash floats are to be managed.

When considering which bank to partner with, be aware that not all banks do things the same way. In fact, not all branches of the same bank do things the same way either. Consider exploring not only different banks, but also different branches of the same bank, to ensure they can offer what you need to conveniently manage your Council's finances.

Some things to think about when choosing a bank include how close the bank is to your home, how easy it is to get to the bank, whether they are willing to visit the home, and if they provide the services your Council needs. You may want to find out if your home/home office has an arrangement with a local bank branch to come to the home regularly so that residents can easily do their banking. This may influence which bank you choose. If this seems daunting, please ask your Residents' Council assistant to help by exploring all of the possibilities, making phone calls, and providing your Council with a summary of their findings. This will help the Council make an informed decision on which bank to do business with.



A Residents' Council of a long-term care home has the power to... sponsor and plan activities for residents.

[2021, c. 39, s. 64 (1) 4]



Increasing restrictions and stricter policies at financial institutions in recent years have created some additional challenges for Residents' Council financial management. The majority of banks do not provide door to door service, which requires that residents leave their LTC home and travel to the bank to sign paperwork to become signing authorities. Furthermore, many residents do not have valid photo ID such as a driver's license which is required by the bank to become signing authorities. Increasing numbers of residents are experiencing cognitive changes resulting in fewer residents able to become signing authorities. Taken together, these conditions present as significant barriers for residents to become signing authorities for the Residents' Council bank account. The following sections introduce some strategies to address these real and perceived challenges.

### Setting Up a Community Bank Account for Your Residents' Council

Most banks have a category of account specifically designed for small organizations like Residents' Councils. They are normally called "community accounts." They have provisions for writing cheques and receiving a monthly statement. The bank may ask you to complete a resolution in order to open an account. A resolution is a document proving that the Council exists and requires a bank account. It is typically required by banks to open accounts and to define which individuals are authorized or revoked to act on behalf of an organization. Many banks have their own resolution which they prefer to use. For liability reasons, we strongly encourage you to open your bank account in the name of the Residents' Council itself and not in the name of an individual or the home.



#### *Providing the Bank with Identification*

Banks require two pieces of identification. If possible, find out what identification the bank would prefer you to bring. This may be primary ID (i.e., anything with a photo, such as a passport or driver's license) accompanied by secondary ID (e.g., SIN card, credit card). Most banks will accept the Record ID of your home for the purpose of a signing officer for the Council's account. Find out if the bank would like you to bring your Council's Bylaws and a signing authority resolution to your bank meeting. Explain that challenges with mobility may limit residents' ability to come to the bank to offer sample signatures, and that they may not have the types of identification normally expected by banks. Consider asking if a banking representative could come to your home to assist in the initial setup of the account.

### *Confirming Who Has Signing Authority on the Account*

Increasingly, financial institutions are becoming more stringent about the acceptable forms of identification for banking purposes. As a response to this changing reality, and because many residents do not possess the required documents, Councils have had to make decisions and necessary adjustments around the selection of new signing authorities for their Residents' Council bank account. Residents may approach their home Administrator or Residents' Council assistant to step in as new or additional signing authorities.

Once you have determined who will have signing authority on the account, you will need to make a decision regarding the number of signatures that will be required when writing cheques. Banks may recommend that cheques written on this kind of account have two signatures. This is a good way to protect the Council's money from fraud. Even if the financial institution you choose does not require it, the Council would be wise to require two signatures on any cheque, and to have at least four residents authorized to be one of those signatories. That way you can be sure that at least two people are readily available.



CONSIDER INSERTING A COPY OF YOUR COUNCIL'S BANKING RESOLUTIONS AT THE END OF SECTION THREE



## Doing the Banking

Not everyone can make a deposit to your Council's bank account. You may wish to ask if the bank has any conditions that must be met concerning who can make a deposit. For each deposit, request that the bank provide you with a receipt for your financial records. There are no restrictions on the amount of money which your Council may maintain in either cash or banked funds.

Ideally, cheques are written by the person serving the role of Treasurer (if applicable) or another member of your leadership team. The Residents' Council assistant may also be asked to assist with physically writing the cheques; however, they are only signed by two of the four signatories. Having four signatories on the account (with any two to sign) will make it much easier when someone is unavailable.

## Maintaining Your Council's Financial Records

Grounded on the principles of not spending more than you have, your Council's bookkeeping essentials will likely be fairly simple. A basic paper or electronic worksheet will work quite nicely as a ledger to track deposits and withdrawals in your petty cash account and bank account. We recommend separately tracking deposits and withdrawals for each of these two accounts. To help a newly elected or acting person serving the role of Treasurer understand how the bookkeeping is currently managed, it is extremely helpful to document the preferred operating procedures.



The person serving the role of Treasurer (or other resident leader assisting with Council finances) does not need to have accounting experience, and neither does the Residents' Council assistant; however, it is important to make careful calculations using straightforward addition and subtraction in order to have the correct balance in your account at the end of each month.

The key to maintaining accurate records is to keep them up to date. If deposits and withdrawals are written in the worksheet as soon as they are made, it will be less time-consuming to manage later on, and you can have confidence that your records are always correct.

If your bank branch uses paperless banking, we encourage the Treasurer/resident leader or Residents' Council assistant to still complete a deposit slip (found in a deposit book provided by the bank) so that there is an itemized record detailing each cheque or cash element of a deposit. This will make it much easier to monitor the Council's finances. Consider setting up a





folder or binder for your financial records and keeping it in a secure location, typically in a locked file, along with the Council's chequebook and deposit slips.

Within a few days of receiving your monthly bank statement, the Treasurer/resident leader or Residents' Council assistant will find it helpful to compare the account or worksheet against the bank's records, particularly in advance of your Council's scheduled meetings where the Council's financial status is reported to members<sup>105</sup>. Unless there are unusual amounts of money recorded, the person serving in the role of Treasurer typically reports the total account balance of petty cash, giving the total deposits and withdrawals for the month. There may be certain transactions which need to have a motion passed by your Council members prior to spending.

Every year at the end of December, you will want to store all of the Council's financial records for that calendar year in a secure place. These need to be kept for at least six years from the end of the previous calendar year.



CONSIDER INSERTING A COPY OF YOUR COUNCIL'S ACCOUNT LEDGERS  
AT THE END OF SECTION THREE

## Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Managing Finances

*Question:* Many residents are unable to leave their LTC home to do their personal banking or banking for the Council. Who is the best contact at a bank branch to request someone from the bank come to the home to assist with managing personal or Council finances?

*Answer:* The Residents' Council assistant can call or physically go to the local financial institution and speak with the Branch manager or Financial Service Representative to determine what transactions and services can be done remotely at the home and in the branch. Each financial institution is different and may even operate differently, depending on the community in which it is situated. If a home is part of a larger corporation, the home office may have banking affiliations already established. The home may want to ask their home office if this is the case.

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*Question:* What types of accounts are appropriate for funds raised by the Residents' Council?

*Answer:* Most financial institutions have non-profit or community accounts which would be appropriate. Visit the local bank branch of the financial institution of your choice and speak to them about the options available to the Council.

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*Question:* What services are available to help the Residents' Council manage and reconcile their funds/support bookkeeping?

*Answer:* The Council could enlist the help of a local bookkeeper; however, cheques and monthly statements are often sufficient because the Council is not-for-profit and does not file tax returns. Cheques and monthly statements can be audited by other Council members to make sure there has been no mismanagement of Council funds. The Council can also choose to set up their bank account with dual signatures, but it is wise to think about the implications of this action.

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*Question:* Our home provides Residents' Council funds on an annual basis to spend at our discretion. Should we set up our own bank account with these funds?

*Answer:* This may not be necessary. It is important to note that the account is controlled by the Residents' Council. Activities of this account are to be under the discretion of the Residents' Council, based on a vote recorded in the minutes of that particular meeting. Signing authorities on the account still fall to residents, not the management of the home. The funds may be released to the Residents' Council on a regular basis (annually or pro-rated monthly, for example). The Residents' Council may wish to secure the money in an independent bank account, or the Council may wish to keep the money at the home, secured within the home's system. If the funds are secured within the home, the home is to provide statements as requested by the Council. It is also important for the members of the Residents' Council to be informed on a regular basis, that money is available for the Council's use.