

RESIDENTS' COUNCILS

ELECTIONS DURING OUTBREAKS

Ontario Long-Term Care Homes

Each Residents' Council group decides how it will operate and is encouraged to capture these important details in a [Bylaws Document](#). Practices may need to change over time, which is why OARC recommends an annual review/update. While Roberts' Rules of Order and having a formalized process for elections has been the "gold standard" for many Residents' Councils over the years, the OARC team understands that this is **not always achievable, realistic or necessary**, during outbreaks and as we move forward with the changing characteristics of Residents' Councils and the residents that comprise them.

NAVIGATING ELECTIONS DURING OUTBREAKS AND BEYOND



*Elizabeth, Residents' Council Leaders
Carefree Lodge, Willowdale*

Planning to execute elections during an outbreak? Consider the following approaches:

- Mini Elections
- Virtual Election
- Mobile Poll/Roving Election
- No Election/Election by Acclamation

As a starting point, OARC recommends that Residents' Council groups review your most recent set of Bylaws and determine if your current elections process is working for you.

- If your Council has a set of [Bylaws](#), you may be bound to some processes that need to be discussed and updated to reflect your changing needs and practises.
- If your Council does not have Bylaws, you may wish to engage in a group discussion to create some and determine what Council structure and approach to elections for now and in the future.

Either way, creating a set of Bylaws or updating the ones previously created can help you to re-envision Residents' Council operations for the better.

OARC Can Help - Bylaw Template

OARC has developed a template to assist your Residents' Council in developing its own bylaws and is designed to capture important aspects of Residents' Council in one document. The template is not prescriptive and allows your Residents' Council to customize all the details.



<https://www.ontarc.com/education-support/tools.html#template>

Adapted Election During Outbreaks

If your Council wishes to proceed with an election, consider ways that your usual process can be adapted based on resident input and health and safety measures. Advertise your upcoming Residents' Council Election on each floor/home area with posters, newsletters and word of mouth, seeking nominations for potential resident leaders as per your usual process.

Promising Practice: Create paper ballots with resident nominee photos and work with Residents' Council Assistant or Programs team to support residents to vote on an individual basis.

Depending on your circumstances, select the most appropriate Election format/approach:

- **Mini Elections:** Hold a mini election on each floor (small group format using traditional ballots or show of hands). Ahead of time, determine whether residents will be electing a representative from their respective areas/floor OR whether they will vote on candidates from throughout the whole home.
- **Virtual Election:** Facilitate one coordinated whole-home election using technology if residents are unable to gather/mix between areas. Consider working with the Programs Department to have team members available to support the process on each area/floor especially if circulating ballots.
- **Mobile Poll/Roving Election:** Facilitate a mobile polling/voting process by having your Residents' Council Assistant (or small team of resident-approved helpers) go door to door to collect individual votes. Be sure to add your Adapted Elections format in your new Bylaws document to provide guidance to resident leaders and teams for future.

No Election/Election by Acclamation

Given the logistics and complexity of coordinating Residents' Council elections, OARC suggests that there may be no need to have an election. Focus your efforts on engaging residents from throughout your home as potential leaders. At an upcoming Council meeting, review your Residents' Council Leadership/Governance structure— this may be a good opportunity to transition to a Shared Leadership Team model. Refer to OARC's [Fact Sheet](#).

An election may not be necessary based on how your Council is structured: **For example**, if your Council decides that it will operate using a Team with up to 8 residents, and you have 8 (or fewer) residents express interest in taking on leadership roles, there is no need to have a formal election/voting process. This is referred to as Election by Acclamation.

For Residents, By Residents

Ontario Association of Residents' Councils

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