

# RESIDENTS' COUNCILS BYLAWS

The *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* outlines the scope and powers of Residents' Councils, and the long-term care home's obligations to the Council. The Act does not specify how meetings take place, and how Councils carry out their scope and powers. This information sheet supports Residents' Councils in creating a set of operating bylaws.

## EXAMPLES OF BYLAWS:

### Meeting Frequency

"Residents' Council meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month, from 2-3pm."

### Membership

"ALL residents are members of the Residents' Council."

### Sharing Meeting Minutes

"Meeting minutes will be prepared by the Council Assistant and approved by the Council President within one (1) week of the meeting. Approved minutes will be posted in each home area and printed for all members in attendance."

### Leadership Structure

"The Council has adopted a Shared Leadership Model, where one (1) representative from each home area is part of the Executive Leadership Team."

*See OARC's Bylaws Template for more*

## WHAT ARE BYLAWS

Merriam Webster's dictionary defines "bylaw" as "*a rule adopted by an organization chiefly for the government of its members and the regulation of its affairs.*"

## WHY DO COUNCILS NEED BYLAWS?

When there are changes to your Residents' Councils either a new leader or a new member and they may not know how your Residents' Council wants to conduct their affairs, bylaws are a great way to:

- Set out clear defined "rules" that are to be followed
- Provide guidance and direction
- Help eliminate confusion
- Help meet specific needs of residents living in the home
- Provide a process for consensus on how your Residents' Council operates

## DOES EVERY RESIDENTS' COUNCILS HAVE THE SAME BYLAWS?

No. Every Residents' Council is run differently in response to the specific needs and preferences of its members. Bylaws reflect the unique circumstances of individual Councils.

OARC recommends using our customizable [bylaws template](#) to guide you through the development process. Helpful prompts ensure that your bylaws are thorough and comprehensive, covering all areas of your Council's operations.

### STEP 1: FORM A SUBCOMMITTEE

OARC recommends putting together a small working group of Residents' Council members to draft the bylaws. Consider including your Council Assistant to assist.

### STEP 2: REVIEW BYLAW TEMPLATE STEP BY STEP

At your working group meeting, start from the beginning of the document and review it step-by-step. The document includes prompts to insert specific information such as your Long-Term Care Home name, meeting dates, locations etc. Depending on your Residents' Council's needs, you may wish to plan for additional meetings to work through the template.

### STEP 3: BRING DRAFTED BYLAWS TO A RESIDENTS' COUNCIL MEETING

Once your working group is satisfied with the drafted bylaws, bring them to a regular Residents' Council meeting to review. Encourage members to contribute to a discussion, then hold a vote to approve and implement them.

### STEP 4: READY TO USE

Once your Council has reached a consensus about the bylaws, they are ready to use. It is important to communicate your bylaws to residents and your home's leadership team. Consider the following:

- Post a copy on your Residents' Council board
- Keep a copy at the beginning of your Residents' Council Binder
- Host a new Member Welcome meeting and go over the Bylaws
- Read through the bylaws annually at a RC meeting
- Create peer-to-peer support, where residents share the bylaws with others

### STEP 5: ANNUALLY REVIEW BYLAWS

OARC recommends that bylaws are reviewed annually and updated where appropriate. All updates and changes must be approved by Residents' Council.

Access OARC's Bylaws Template, available in English and French:  
<https://www.ontarc.com/education-support/tools.html#template>

## For Residents, By Residents

**Ontario Association of Residents' Councils**

T 905-731-3710 x 220 | Toll-free 1-800-532-0201

F 905-731-1755 | [info@ontarc.com](mailto:info@ontarc.com) | [www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com)

