

February 23, 2016

**Hon. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long Term Care**

Re: “Patients First” Discussion Paper

In reply to a call for feedback to the proposal for changes to health care delivery in Ontario, the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) commends the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care on several of its innovative ideas and changes to some existing programs. We agree that integration of home care and primary care is essential for improved outcomes for patients. The LHINs should determine whether home care is administered in Community Health Centres, Family Health Teams, community hospitals, etc., depending on local circumstances. This would allow for more flexibility and innovation, a continuum of care, and better control of service quality.

At present, home care clients have problems with frequent turnover of Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and a lack of commitment by some who consider the job a stop-gap because of poor pay and poor working conditions. Home care requires more rigorous oversight and local accountability to its patients. The Ministry’s proposal for a higher minimum hourly wage for PSWs and for an improvement in their status could encourage them to consider home care a career choice, with refresher and upgrading courses leading to advancement.

Bundling care, as proposed, is long overdue, but it would require all pieces of the bundle to be handled by one manager. A self-directed care plan is an excellent idea, providing that controls are in place to ensure that the care is actually delivered. It will work, because those patients with enough finances to hire their own care givers do quite well.

Proposal #3 of 'Patients First' states that home care services would continue to be provided by current service providers. Contracts with corporations that are required to make a profit for their shareholders make improvements and innovations like bundling of services, self-directed care, and enhancement of the PSW role in home care unlikely if not impossible. While substantial changes are being made to home care this would be the time to phase out such contracts as they expire and have the new home care administrators hire needed staff directly. This would eliminate one level of administration, with its costs, and place responsibility for outcomes locally. The existing system of contracting out home care service delivery is not compatible with the direction in which the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is moving.

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario was established in 1923 as a federate of the National Council of Women of Canada. The aim of the Council is to work for the betterment of conditions pertaining to family, community and society. PCWO is composed of 4 Local Councils, 8 Provincially Organized Societies and 1 Study Group.

Mary Potter, President PCWO

cc. Premier Kathleen Wynne
Patrick Brown, P.C. Leader
Andrea Horwath, NDP Leader