

**Ministry of Health**

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181-2023-480

December 21, 2023

Mr. Kenneth Joseph (“Joe”) Parker  
Board Chair  
Home and Community Care Support Services  
via email

Dear Mr. Parker:

I am pleased to share our government’s 2024-25 priorities for Home and Community Care Support Services organizations with you.

As Chair, you and your Board of Directors play a vital role in helping Home and Community Care Support Services organizations achieve their mandate. It is important that your agencies’ goals, objectives and strategic direction continue to align with our government’s priorities and direction. As you begin planning for 2024-25, we will continue to look to your collaboration as we transform and modernize Ontario’s health care system to improve patient access to care, including the next steps to modernize home care. This is part of the Ministry of Health’s next steps to transition home care to Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), consistent with Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care and builds on the work to date to support the integration of home and community care as part of OHTs.

The government introduced Bill 135: the *Convenient Care at Home Act, 2023* to consolidate the 14 Home and Community Care Support Services organizations into a single Service Organization, named Ontario Health atHome. Bill 135 received Royal Assent on December 4, 2023. Through a carefully planned consolidation facilitated by the proclamation of Bill 135 anticipated for mid-2024, Ontario Health atHome would assume responsibility for providing the same services as Home and Community Care Support Services.

In addition to continuing to deliver current services, Ontario Health atHome would have a new mandate that includes advancing home and community care modernization and supporting OHTs as they continue to build capacity and assume responsibility for home care delivery.

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The responsibility for providing home care services is anticipated to begin transitioning to OHTs in 2025, supported by Ontario Health atHome. I recognize that the consolidation and new role will require significant implementation in 2024-25 and the priorities outlined in this letter reflect that.

In addition, there are government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. As part of the Ontario government, agencies are expected to act in the best interests of Ontarians by being efficient, effective and providing value for money to taxpayers. Agencies are also required to adhere to government policies and directives.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, this letter sets out my expectations for the 14 Home and Community Care Support Services organizations for the 2024-25 fiscal year. The direction outlined in this letter is consistent with our government priorities, your agencies’ mandate, key policies and directives.

These government priorities include:

**1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management**

- Operating within each agency’s financial allocations.
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario’s bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives.
- Complying with realty interim measures for agency office space.
- Leveraging and meeting benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

**2. Transparency and Accountability**

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable.
- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board’s role in agency governance and accountability, and providing the Minister with annual skills matrices to ensure boards have qualified appointees.
- Reviewing and updating agency KPIs annually to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

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### **3. Risk Management**

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of each agency’s risks, including cyber security, and any future emergency risks.

### **4. Workforce/Labour Management**

- Optimizing organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including aligning resources to priority areas, where needed.
- Aligning Human Resource and Accommodations strategies with OPS directives and policy.
- Adhering to Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet labour and bargaining mandates.
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

### **5. Diversity and Inclusion**

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

### **6. Data Collection, Sharing and Use**

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

### **7. Digital Delivery and Customer Service**

- Exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery to ensure customer service standards are met.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations.

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In addition to these government-wide priorities, for the 2024-25 fiscal year, I am asking the Home and Community Care Support Services organizations to focus on the following key priorities:

1. Continue to work with the ministry, Ontario Health, the Ministry of Long-Term Care when appropriate, and health system organizations to plan, develop and implement activities to respond to ongoing system needs. This includes supporting health system seasonal respiratory response and Alternate Level of Care strategies.
2. Continue to:
  - provide home and community care services;
  - manage placements of persons into long-term care homes, supportive housing programs, chronic care and rehabilitation beds in hospitals, and other programs and places where home and community care services are provided; and
  - provide information to the public about, and refer patients to, providers of health and social services, where applicable.
3. Continue to streamline, and standardize, where appropriate, the organizational processes, contracts, quality measures and internal resources required to ensure operational stability, and support continuity in the provision of high-quality home and community care services, in alignment with modernization and transition. Continue to engage with Service Provider Organizations’ leadership to review performance, quality and assess risk within the system.
4. Continue to work with the ministry and Ontario Health to advance home and community care modernization, by contributing to and/or developing updated or new policies and guidelines for providers of home and community care services, implementing and supporting implementation of new models of care including Leading Projects, and implementing policies, directives, guidelines and other requirements applicable to the provision of home and community care services by Home and Community Care Support Services, based on ministry guidance.
5. Continue to work with the ministry, Ontario Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care to support the transition of long-term care home placement to Ontario Health atHome, and to support:
  - Improved transition or flow of applicants to long-term care homes where appropriate;
  - Integration and alignment of home and community care services and long-term care placement, where appropriate; and

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- Planning for the future state model of Long-Term Care placement functions as determined and communicated by the Ministry of Long-Term Care.
6. Work collaboratively with the ministry, Ontario Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care to support the consolidation of the 14 agencies to Ontario Health atHome, including through participation in tri-lateral meetings, alignment with shared workplans and information sharing as requested. Further, work with all parties to ensure the continuity of services throughout the transition, including the successful transition of the agencies’ assets and liabilities, functions, accountability and to ensure continuity of service delivery.
  7. Work with the ministry, Ontario Health, and other home care delivery partners to implement the Ministry’s direction to update the service provider organization selection process and contracts, including to improve quality and spread new models of care. This includes executing the Minister’s directive on Modernizing Home and Community Care Service Provider Organization Selection Process and Agreements, dated November 14, 2023.

The Home and Community Care Support Services organizations’ plan to address these priorities must be outlined in the agencies’ Annual Business Plan to be submitted to the Minister of Health by January 1, 2024, and cover the period from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025. Assistant Deputy Minister Rhonda McMichael may provide additional details about these priorities to assist with planning.

In addition, as part of ongoing operations, Home and Community Care Support Services organizations are expected to operate within their respective budget allocations set by the ministry and to demonstrate openness and transparency by publicly posting governance documents and information related to expenses, as well as Board meeting minutes.

Together, we will continue to build a health care system that is patient and family-centred, will improve the patient and provider experience, provide better, more connected care, improve health outcomes, and capture better value for health care dollars so Ontarians can rest assured there will be a modern, integrated and sustainable health care system for them, when and where they need it.

Thank you for your continued leadership and service and I look forward to working closely with you, the Board, and Home and Community Care Support Services staff to achieve these objectives. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to me and the people of Ontario.

Mr. Kenneth Joseph ("Joe") Parker

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Amy Olmstead, Director, Home and Community Care Branch, Strategic Partnerships Division, at Amy.Olmstead@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by the Minister

Sylvia Jones  
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

c: Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health  
Melissa Thomson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care  
Cynthia Martineau, Chief Executive Officer, Home and Community Care Support Services  
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Health Integration and Partnerships, Ministry of Health  
Rhonda McMichael, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Partnerships Division, Ministry of Health