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**Subject:** Seniors Services Quality Improvement Report: January to March 2025

**Report to:** Public Health and Social Services Committee

**Report date:** Tuesday, May 6, 2025

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## **Recommendations**

1. That COM15-2025 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

## **Key Facts**

- The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with highlights of quality initiatives for Seniors Services.
- Areas of focus in this report are:
  - Long-Term Care Facility InterRAI Transition and Implementation
  - Registered Nurse Outreach Project
  - Leveraging Technology Through Point-of-Care Testing

## **Financial Considerations**

The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) and Ontario Health West are the primary sources of funding for the Seniors Services division. Other funding sources include user fees and levy.

## **Analysis**

### **Long-Term Care Facility InterRAI Transition and Implementation**

In Ontario, Long-Term Care (LTC) homes use standardized tools to assess residents' needs and plan quality care in pre-determined intervals and when the care needs of the resident changes. For years, LTC including Seniors Services, have used the RAI-Minimum Data Set 2.0 to collect information on residents' physical, mental, and emotional health. The data helps care teams create individualized care plans and supports government decisions about funding, staffing and improvements to care. This tool is now being replaced by the more modern interRAI Long-Term Care Facilities (interRAI-LTCF) assessment, which provides a fuller picture of each resident's physical, mental, and social needs and helps coordinate care across different health settings.

To support this shift, in January 2025, Seniors Services and the Ministry of Long-Term Care partnered to pilot the new assessment, with Niagara Region serving as a lead organization. By April 1, 2025, the interRAI-LTCF rolled out to LTC homes across Ontario had been initiated. Roll-out will be finalized by Q3 2025.

This new tool helps staff create more personalized care plans, detect changes in residents' health earlier, and to work more effectively as a team. Staff have been trained on the new system, which is now also tied to the province's funding model, helping ensure resources match the care each resident needs. As an early adopter, Niagara's Seniors Services is leading the way in advancing person-centered, data-informed care across the province.

### **Registered Nurse Outreach Project**

In January 2025, Seniors Services partnered with Ontario Health to pilot the Registered Nurse (RN) Outreach Project. This role was designed to support nursing teams directly at the point of care, offering clinical guidance, mentorship, and education to help staff manage increasingly complex resident conditions. Through timely clinical support, the Outreach RN has enabled staff to recognize and respond to changes in residents' health more quickly. This has led to improved stability and a noticeable reduction in emergency hospital transfers, ensuring that residents can remain in their familiar environment whenever possible.

The Outreach RN has also played a key role in ensuring that care planning remains resident-centered. By incorporating residents' goals and preferences into day-to-day care, families have expressed greater satisfaction with communication and involvement in decision-making.

In addition to supporting care delivery, the RN Outreach role has contributed to staff development through ongoing bedside teaching and informal education. This focus on skill-building has helped enhance the clinical capacity of the team and supports long-term improvements in care quality.

The introduction of the RN Outreach role has had a significant and positive impact on the quality of life for residents, particularly those with complex medical needs. Seniors Services is advocating with Ontario Health West to consider funding permanent implementation of the pilot project in future.

## **Leveraging Technology Through Point-of-Care Testing**

Seniors Services, in collaboration with LifeLabs and Ontario Health, is introducing Point of Care (POC) testing in select long-term care homes and seniors' congregate settings. The POC testing is designed to complement, not replace, the comprehensive laboratory services currently provided by our contracted laboratory service provider. More complex or specialized tests will continue to be managed through the existing laboratory system.

Implementation of POC testing will begin this quarter at Linhaven, Woodlands of Sunset, and Meadows of Dorchester. This initiative allows staff to perform a limited range of essential diagnostic tests, including select infection screenings, directly within the care home. The goal is to support faster clinical decision-making, reduce delays in treatment, enhance the overall resident experience, and help prevent unnecessary emergency department transfers.

As part of this partnership, LifeLabs will provide the necessary equipment, staff training, and quality oversight for POC testing, while Ontario Health will support system integration and ensure alignment with provincial health data standards. Together, these efforts reflect a shared commitment to improving timely access to high-quality care for seniors across the province.

## **Alternatives Reviewed**

Quarterly quality improvement reports provide committee and council with important information, supporting accountability, transparency and a culture of best practice and continuous quality improvement. As the governing body for the Region's LTC Homes, it is important that Council receives these reports to ensure high quality of care, understand the successes, challenges and opportunities experienced in these facilities and meet legislative accountability requirements of LTC.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

The Long-Term Care Facility InterRAI Transition and Implementation, Registered Nurse Outreach Project, and Point-of-Care Testing initiatives align with the Council's strategic priority of building an equitable region. These initiatives support continuous improvement and the modernization of processes to ensure value-for-money in Seniors Services. The Registered Nurse Outreach Project and Point-of-Care Testing also support the objective of investing in and strengthening the knowledge, skills, and

judgment of the Seniors Services workforce, particularly in managing residents' care needs.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

[COM 3-2025 Seniors Services Quality Improvement Report: October-December 2024](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41289)  
(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41289>)

[COM 3-2025 Appendix 1 – Supporting Table and Figures](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41290)  
(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41290>)

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### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Supporting Tables and Figures