

Date: January 15, 2026

**The Honourable Kusendova-Bashta
Minister of Long-Term Care**

Dear Minister Kusendova-Bashta,

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) would like to offer our congratulations and support for the Ministry's \$9 million investment to train staff in 15 long-term care homes in emotion-based care.

We understand this will be a pilot project and believe this to be one of the most important initiatives in the last 40 years – one that could ultimately change long-term care homes from 'Institutions to Homes' in Ontario. However, older Ontarians and their families will judge this initiative not by the announcement, but by whether it delivers measurable, enforceable improvements in day-to-day care.

For this reason, CARP believes it is essential that this funding be accompanied by clear, explicit direction from the province. The investment must be tied to enforceable expectations for the homes, a best-practice framework for emotion-based care, and strong accountability mechanisms so that results are transparent and cannot be treated as optional or "nice to have"

When we met your staff on November 10, we were informed that the project was still in its early stages, with not many details available. For this reason, we would like to bring to your attention some of the most important aspects that we, as well as many experts in the field, believe would be integral to the success of this project:

- **The Leader of the Project:** The criteria for the lead and trainer for the emotion-based care must be a qualified trainer in *culture change* and not just an expert in dementia care. A few of these traits would be strong leadership skills, empathy, vision, experience in culture change, and emotional intelligence.
- **Clear, Consistent Criteria for Participating Homes:** The long-term care homes applying to participate must all adhere to the same criteria: design, staffing approach, and culture change. This is critical for both fairness and evaluation. Without consistent expectations across all sites, it will be impossible to credibly assess outcomes or build best-practice models that can be scaled to the rest of the sector.

We have also recently met with MPP Tyler Watt, Critic for Long-Term Care, and other government officials to raise these same concerns directly.

For the past five years, CARP has been showcasing innovative long-term care homes in Ontario and other provinces that have already transitioned to an emotion-based approach to care, meaning from 'Institutions to Homes'. There are many to choose from: the Eden Alternative, the Green House, the Butterfly Model, the Dementia Villages, as well as some hybrid models. These are not theoretical concepts; they are proven, practical models that should inform Ontario's framework and evaluation criteria.

As a nurse who has experience in the front line of our health care system, we know that you understand the enormous benefits of transitioning from the traditional institutional and task-oriented model of care to an emotion-based approach. If implemented with strong provincial direction and accountability, this pilot project would be a game changer for both those living and working in Ontario's long-term care homes – and could ultimately result in large cost savings through reduced hospital transfers, reduced staff turnover, and better health outcomes.

CARP has worked with many of the leaders in the field over the years. CARP would be pleased to support the Ministry in its search for the most experienced and suitable candidates for this critical role. That being said, we will also be monitoring implementation closely and reporting back to our members on the progress and impact of this investment.

We appreciate that you and your Ministry have taken this important step. Our members are looking to you to ensure that this funding is not only well spent, but it leads to enforceable, province-wide improvements in long-term care. CARP stands ready to work with you to make that happen.

Respectfully,

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