

COMMUNITY —

Ontario Announces Further Staffing Investments at Local Long-Term Care Homes

A total of \$5,677,608 will be distributed to long-term care homes in Oxford county

By Lee Griffi

As part of its plan to fix long-term care, the Ontario government is providing up to \$673 million in 2022 to long-term care homes across the province to increase staffing levels, leading to more direct care for residents. This includes \$5,677,608 for long-term care homes in Oxford County, including Tavistock.

This is part of the province's commitment to ensure long-term care residents receive, on average, four hours of direct care per day by 2024-25. Tavistock's peopleCare will receive up to \$715,152 for additional staffing, while The Maples Home for Seniors is getting up to \$305,256.

Sheena Campbell is the Vice-President of Communications for peopleCare. She says the company is proud of their frontline teams at the home and their unwavering commitment to residents throughout the pandemic. "We have maintained a full staffing complement and in fact, were able to increase staffing during some challenging times. We so appreciate all the new investments from the government including to support long-term care homes through COVID and ensuring we have the resources to add staff."

Stuart Oakley is the Manager of Corporate Communications at Caressant Care, and he also welcomes the money despite it not being a new announcement. "We are very pleased with additional money that addresses long-standing issues in long-term care such as staffing. To clarify, though, what was recently announced is not new funding. This funding was actually first announced back in October and is funding we have been receiving since November that will continue for this fiscal year. It will take 3-4 years to ramp up funding levels."

Campbell says corporate staff are meeting with team members at the home to figure out what works best for their residents. "We are finalizing a schedule that adds hours to direct resident care from both the clinical and interdisciplinary team members, to ensure residents' care needs are met, based on their individual needs. Yes, we will meet the target for the new funding."

As for Caressant Care, Oakley says The Maples has been able to keep staffing levels up during the pandemic, and while there aren't concrete details yet around the four hours of average care per day, he

doesn't feel it will be an issue. "The province has yet to fully define how this will be calculated, however, as long as funding continues to increase, we are reasonably confident we will achieve 4 hours of care by the target date."

Virtually every long-term care home in the province is constantly recruiting new staff due to the high turnover of employees. Oakley says Caressant Care is currently looking for some help in Tavistock. "The home has been successful in hiring however is always looking for personal support workers but at present the home is adequately staffed. We will be looking to hire some nursing students for the summer to allow our regular nursing employees to take vacation."

Campbell says peopleCare is constantly looking to hire new employees and provide more training for current ones. "Recruitment is always ongoing at the home, and we have great partnerships with colleges and universities. Some team members have also participated in the education opportunities recently funded by the government, for example moving from one of our non-clinical teams into a PSW role, so that's a very positive outcome for

both our staff and our residents."

Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman says the money reaffirms the Conservative government's commitment to improving long-term care. "This funding will allow homes in our community to hire and retain more staff so they can provide more care to residents, every day. This is part of our government's plan to hire thousands of new staff over the next four years to ensure those living in long-term care get the high-quality care they need and deserve."

"We know that more qualified staff means more daily care for residents," said Paul Calandra, Minister of Long-Term Care. "Hiring more staff is part of our government's plan to fix long-term care and to improve the quality of care residents receive and the quality of life they experience."

Caressant Care owns and operates 15 long-term care homes across Ontario. peopleCare owns and manages a total of eight homes and has a redevelopment planned for their Tavistock home. Construction is expected to begin this year on a new 128-bed facility.

Kitchener-Conestoga MP commemorates World Down Syndrome Day



Kitchener-Conestoga Member of Parliament (MP) Tim Louis displayed this sign outside of his home in Kitchener on Monday, March 21 for World Down Syndrome Day. "Today we proudly display this sign in hopes to bring awareness and help everyone in the community 'see the person, see the ability,'" said Louis. (Photo credit: Brooklyn Louis)

It's back to class after spring break



Pictured headed back to school on Monday morning, March 21, after their week off with March break, are Tavistock public school students. Left to right, Makenna McKay and Morgan Gerich, both grade 5 students; Saige Gerich in grade 8 and Finn Park, who is a senior kindergarten student. All four said they are glad to be going back to school to see their teachers and friends again. (Photo credit: Gary West)