



ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO MIDWIVES

SUBMISSION ON

BILL 74, THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE ACT, 2019

TO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

April 2, 2019

Introduction

The Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations to *Bill 74: The People's Health Care Act (2019), An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and appeals.*

The AOM supports a health care system that puts clients' needs first and prioritizes a well-connected, sustainable, and accessible public health care system.

The AOM supports a health care system that discourages for-profit health care, invests in preventive health measures, and protects and values primary health care in every Ontario community.

The People's Health Care Act reflects many of the values of the profession of midwifery. Midwives agree that "a health care system should be centred around people, patients, their families, and their caregivers".

This year, over 29,000 families will have the care of a midwife. Over 200,000 families have received midwifery care since it was legislated 25 years ago. With a proven safety record, midwives are experts at providing excellent, evidence-based primary care to clients and their newborns in hospital, home, and birth centres. They provide care that Ontario families deeply value. For example, a recent study showed very high rates of client satisfaction [1], significantly higher than that of family physicians or obstetricians.[2] By offering birth at home or at birthing centres, as well as providing successful vaginal birth after C-sections, Ontario midwives effectively reduce hospital stays and free up beds and hospital resources for those who need it most. In fact, midwifery clients

in Ontario have a 13% lower C-section rate, a 34% lower epidural rate[3], a 20% home birth rate [4], and shorter hospital length of stay than the Provincial average.[5]

As the only province-wide primary health care professionals who provide continuity across both the hospital and community sector on a 24/7 basis, midwives possess unique expertise in coordinating care for effective and excellent delivery of health services. As a result, midwives are ideally positioned to assist and advise the government with developing this new system of care.

Recommendation: Indigenous health programs designed and delivered by Indigenous health leaders

The preamble to Bill 74 states that this legislation will “recognize the role of Indigenous peoples in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of health services in their communities”. We recommend that the legislation be explicit about creating and protecting Indigenous-led models of health care. Evidence is clear that the health of communities begins with a fully integrated, culturally safe model with families at the centre. We urge government to ensure this health care transformation fully takes into account and collaborates with Indigenous leaders currently addressing Indigenous health. Indigenous community leadership prioritizing care in community, on a local level, is key to a successful health system.

Recommendation: A strong focus on perinatal services in *all* communities

Midwives urge government to prioritize a strong focus on creating, protecting and maintaining local perinatal and newborn care. Childbirth is the number one reason for admission to hospital in Ontario, with cesarean delivery the number one surgical procedure. The midwifery model of care has provided excellent clinical outcomes and demonstrates efficient use of hospital resources by decreasing lengths of stay and unnecessary medical interventions. Lowering lengths of stay and reducing rates of intervention is a significant cost saving measure. A system that provides seamless home care by primary health care providers is a direct investment in Ontario’s health. Midwives provide care in over 90 communities across Ontario, keeping families together and close to home during this important time, with very high rates of client satisfaction.

The provision of care in smaller communities must be protected in the legislation. Currently, Bill 74 does not address rural, remote or Far North provision of care. Birth care in rural, remote and Far North communities must be led by experts in birth care and community health. Midwives have demonstrated expertise in northern communities, providing timely and effective care where it is most needed, together with other committed health professionals. We urge government to make

amendments to the legislation to protect and maintain vibrant health care services in small towns and remote areas.

Recommendation: Integrated care with full scope for providers

To deliver on this new vision of health care, the government must ensure that all health professionals are able to work in their fullest scope of practice. Underutilizing midwives' skill and knowledge creates inefficiencies that undermine the intentions of Bill 74. Unnecessary transfers of care and physician consultation cost the system more, placing more demands on an overburdened system and leading to a delay in care for Ontarians. Care coordination by midwives is an essential part of an integrated and efficient health care system.

Current limitations on scope of practice are barriers to this transformation, including existing delays in approving new regulations regarding lab and drug prescribing. Improving access to lab and drug prescribing to allow professionals to work in their fullest scope eliminates the duplication of services and ends unnecessary clinic or hospital visits for Ontarians.

The AOM looks forward to the government's actions to increase secure access to digital health services, including an integrated patient record system for Ontario. Patient centred digital records are an essential step towards facilitating collaboration and seamless care. Equitable access to this technology across all sectors is paramount to providing a safe and positive patient experience in a system that is truly integrated.

Conclusion

The midwifery model of care boasts excellent clinical outcomes, and is a cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars and an effective way of cutting hospital wait times and ending hallway health care. Ontario's commitment to working collaboratively with other health care practitioners while putting clients' interests first aligns perfectly with our association's evidence-based, cost-effective recommendations for Ontario's health sector. Midwives provide a seamless transition from hospital to home and have great success coordinating care during a very exciting time for families in Ontario. These families deserve to have the demonstrated excellence of midwives to lead this transformation and deliver the best in health care. Our recommendations to Bill 74 will establish an explicit commitment to communities and families and truly keep clients at the centre of their care.

For further discussion or comment, contact Christine Allen RM, Manager, Policy and Communications, at christine.allen@aom.on.ca or (416) 425-9974 ext 2227.

References

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