
DELAYED VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECKS IMPACTING LONG-TERM CARE STAFFING IN ONTARIO

Overview

Ontario's Long-Term Care (LTC) homes continue to face unprecedented challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff to provide high-quality care to residents. While the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 rightly mandates that all employees and volunteers complete a Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC) prior to working in a home, significant delays in obtaining these checks from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are impeding recruitment, timely hiring and onboarding.

These delays in the County of Renfrew are currently 8-10 weeks creating staffing bottlenecks that directly affect the ability of homes to meet legislated staffing requirements and deliver consistent care to residents. As the demand for health-care workers grows and the workforce shortage intensifies, addressing this administrative delay has become critical to ensuring the stability and safety of care in Ontario's LTC homes.

Current Context

LTC homes across the province have reported difficulty in securing VSCs through local OPP detachments due to high volume and extended processing times. In rural and northern communities – such as those served by the County of Renfrew – the problem is especially pronounced, with some applicants waiting over eight weeks to receive their completed checks.

These delays mean that otherwise qualified candidates – Registered Practical Nurses, Personal Support Workers, and dietary and housekeeping staff – are unable to begin employment, even when urgent staffing needs exist. The result is increased overtime and burnout among existing staff, and reduced continuity of care for residents.

The sector fully supports the intent of the VSC requirement, which plays an essential role in protecting our vulnerable residents. However, current system inefficiencies are unintentionally hindering compliance with the very legislation designed to strengthen resident safety.

Actions Required

To ensure the continued delivery of safe, high-quality care, the long-term care sector respectfully requests provincial attention and partnership to:

- Work with the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the OPP to expedite processing times for VSCs for LTC applicants;
- Explore a streamlined, sector-specific process or improved digital verification system to prioritize applicants seeking employment in health and LTC;
- Establish clear service standards and reporting for VSC turnaround times

- Provide interim guidance allowing conditional employment or attestations, under supervision, while checks are being processed in good faith.

Conclusion

Ontario's LTC homes are committed to maintaining the highest standards of resident safety and regulatory compliance. However, the current delay in obtaining VSCs through the OPP is a significant barrier to building and sustaining the workforce that our residents rely on.

By improving and prioritizing the VSC process for health and LTC applicants, the province can strengthen both compliance and capacity – ensuring that every long-term care home is able to attract and retain the staff it needs to deliver high quality services through compassionate, person-centered care without unnecessary delays.

