

BULLETIN

Ontario fails to set minimum nursing home standards

June 19, 2008

Toronto (19 June 2008) - The Ontario government has broken an election promise to set a minimum standard of care for the 75,000 people who live in long-term care nursing homes across the province.

Premier Dalton McGuinty made the pledge in 2005. Critics have called for a standard of at least 3.5 hours of care daily for elderly patients living in long-term care institutions.

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) has been one of the most prominent groups calling for a legislated minimum number of care hours and for the provision of targeted funding by Ottawa to help cover the cost. The union has produced a report on the issue.

"Ottawa has a responsibility to provide adequate and targeted funding toward cost sharing long-term care programs," the NUPGE report says. "It is the responsibility of provincial governments and territories to bear their share of the costs, to establish minimum standards that ensure quality care, and to provide adequate oversight and inspection. Many of these governments have failed in their responsibilities. That has had a devastating impact, both on residents and the workers attempting to provide quality and compassionate care."

Ontario releases Sharkey report

Health Minister George Smitherman rejected calls for a minimum standard this week when he released a report by Shirlee Sharkey, entitled [*People Caring for People: Impacting the Quality of Life and Care of Residents of Long-Term Care Homes*](#).

Sharkey reported that residents are now receiving from 1.9 to 5.1 hours of care each day. While calling on the government to set a target, the report also said that counting hours is not the only way to improve quality.

Smitherman made the same argument in explaining the government's change of heart on the issue. "The number (of hours) alone is not the answer to the quality and outcome that we seek," he said.

The Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) expressed deep disappointment at the news, noting that long-term care levels have remained stagnant since 1995 despite the pumping of more than \$1 billion in new funding into the industry by the province.

"One would think that the McGuinty government would want improved accountability about how the money is being spent," said OHC director Natalie Mehra.

Derrell Dular of the Alliance of Seniors/Older Canadians Network accused the premier and the minister of going back on a Liberal election pledge to Ontario voters. "Seniors will have to escalate the fight to win proper regulation and accountability for Ontario's long-term care homes," Dular said.

Derek Chadwick of Canadian Pensioners Concerned said the government was seizing on "a report by a person who is not an expert in long-term care homes" to replace a decade of research irrefutably linking care levels with "outcomes such as reduced bed sores, reduced dehydration and reduced needs for hospitalization."

NUPGE

More information:

â—□ [James Clancy Commentary - Dignity Denied: Long-term care and Canadas elderly](#)

â—□ [Dignity Denied: Long-Term Care and Canada's Elderly - pdf](#)

â—□ [Ontario Health Coalition](#)

â—□ [People Caring for People: Impacting the Quality of Life and Care of Residents of Long-Term Care Homes](#)

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