



© SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION ONTARIO

Eldercare Reform – A Provincial Election Priority

November 4, 2021

Background and Context

Several well documented issues highlight the imperative for serious and immediate transformation of the eldercare system in Ontario, including;

1. **We can't afford to "build" our way out of the growing need for elder care.** Ontario's Financial Accountability Office (FAO) projects spending on long-term care will more than double by 2030 and still be insufficient to meet waiting lists for LTC bedsⁱ. The Queens University report, *Aging Well*, by noted researchers Drummond and Sinclair confirm that, given the demographics, the costs for long term care (LTC) facilities will rise from 1.3% of GDP to 4.2% by 2041, an increase that is unaffordable for governmentsⁱⁱ.
2. **Significant harm and abuse of LTC residents unrelated to buildings has never been stopped by government Inspection Reports or by compliance legislationⁱⁱⁱ.** For decades the LTC Ministry's inspection reports have noted serious treatment problems in facilities^{iv} ^v that include; overmedication and medication errors; unwitnessed falls that result in harm, hospitalization and death; lack of skin and wound care that results in septicemia and death; staff on resident abuse; food and fluid intake not monitored resulting in weight loss and dehydration; routinization where residents are gotten up, fed and toileted whenever someone can get to them; given only one bath a week.
3. **The institutional model of care has failed all vulnerable social groups.** Harm, abuse, neglect, deaths, and resulting lawsuits have been noted for, indigenous youth in residential schools^{vi}, troubled youth in training schools^{vii}, people with mental illness in asylums^{viii}, people who have an intellectual / developmental disability in regional centres^{ix} ^x, and seniors and people with disabilities in Ontario's long term care system.
4. **Seniors and people with disabilities don't want to enter into LTC facilities.** The National Institute on Aging reports that 97% of seniors in Ontario (those over 65) say they will do everything they can to avoid long term care facilities^{xi}. According to recent Ministry of Health data sheets, 69% of LTC residents do not have a significant disability. Elders can be supported to live in the community.
5. **The senior demographic is surging.** The FAO projects that the number of Ontarians aged 75 and over will increase by 52 per cent from 2018-19 to 2029-30^{xii}. Seniors have not been seriously consulted about their need for care and support as they age.
6. **Home Care and Seniors Community Support is seriously underfunded.** *"The measly 0.2 percent of GDP Canada spends on home care is one of the lowest allocations in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development"*^{xiii} (OECD). This underfunding has led to a crisis in this sector that is seeing many staff leave because of low wages

A PATH FORWARD

There is a growing consensus that elder care requires a shift in thinking in order to develop a sustainable, affordable model of community support and living arrangements that engage and empower seniors and their supporters.^{xiv xv}

Policy Considerations for Aging in Place and in Community with Support

- A. Plan comprehensively and seriously consult with elders and their families.** The fragmented approach to elder care planning is problematic. For example, two different Ministries oversee home care and LTC, two interrelated elder care components, where changes in one can seriously affect the other. The input of seniors themselves into eldercare policy is marginalized by the primary focus on consultations for reform with sector specific stakeholders such as nursing home organizations, service providers, labour unions, academics, developers, and investors. These groups are not adequate proxies for the views of seniors.
- B. Expand and strengthen Ontario's non-profit home care programs and the seniors' community support associations.** This will allow seniors to age in place as per their wish and to develop a sustainable system of support programs and skilled home and health care professionals.
- C. Support caregivers.** Provide relief and assistance to family caregivers through direct grants, refundable tax credits, and / or through programs such as *Paid Family Caregiver*, now offered in Newfoundland^{xvi}.
- D. Allow for more flexible and portable use of funding.** A *Money Follows the Person* policy, as per USA initiatives^{xvii} allows for greater personal autonomy in developing supported living options with elders and families, especially when coupled with strengthening seniors' community support associations who can help manage the support arrangements.
- E. Develop neighbourhood based small residential options with support.** These options can be operated by municipal and non-profit providers. Such options have proven to be more safe and secure for over 19,000 people in Ontario with significant intellectual / developmental disabilities, including those who have medically complex needs and challenging behaviour, compared with the institutional model of care (LTC).
- F. Reframe the role of Case Managers in the elder care health and support system.** Shift the role from determining eligibility for service and placing people into care towards a role that plans with elders and their families by building on their strengths – a strengths-based approach. In this role case managers will focus on formal paid supports as well as informal supports such as support circles and neighbourhood connections.

REFERENCES

- ⁱ <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-two-years-behind-goal-of-15-000-new-ltc-beds-by-2024-fiscal-watchdog-says-1.5442942>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.queensu.ca/sps/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.spswww/files/files/Publications/Ageing%20Well%20Report%20-%20November%202020.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/marketplace/nursing-homes-abuse-ontario-seniors-laws-1.5770889>
- ^{iv} <https://www.concernedfriends.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Concerned-Friends-2020-LTC-Inspection-Report.pdf>
- ^v <https://www.cbc.ca/news/marketplace/nursing-homes-long-term-care-1.6049857>
- ^{vi} <https://publichealthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40985-017-0055-6>
- ^{vii} <https://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/cbc-docs-pov/stories-of-abuse-and-trauma-survivors-say-ontario-s-training-schools-failed-children-1.6171258>
- ^{viii} <https://globalnews.ca/news/7132762/psychiatrists-ontario-liable-patient-abuse/>
- ^{ix} <https://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/article/download/99/153>
- ^x <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-class-action-settlement-adult-mental-disabilities-1.3555337>
- ^{xi} <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c2fa7b03917eed9b5a436d8/t/60428c8d3c118d6237a6ac11/1614974093703/English+NIA+CMA+Report.pdf>, page 7
- ^{xii} <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-two-years-behind-goal-of-15-000-new-ltc-beds-by-2024-fiscal-watchdog-says-1.5442942>
- ^{xiii} <https://www.queensu.ca/sps/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.spswww/files/files/Publications/Ageing%20Well%20Report%20-%20November%202020.pdf>
- ^{xiv} <https://www.therecord.com/opinion/2021/02/01/its-time-to-shift-our-thinking-on-long-term-care.html>
- ^{xv} <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/01/11/its-time-to-rethink-long-term-care-for-seniors.html>
- ^{xvi} <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/long-term-care/family-caregiving/>
- ^{xvii} <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/money-follows-person/index.html>