



## **SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)**

### *Editorial*

# **IS THIS AN APRIL FOOL'S JOKE OR ARE THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS HARD OF HEARING?**

**April 1, 2024**

## **INTRODUCTION**

How many of us have written to, and called our MPP's and MP's and gotten no responses or a form response? How many have felt frustrated and angry that the people we have elected to serve us choose to ignore us except around election time? How fed up are you? Are you fed up enough to tell them when they come looking for your vote that since they couldn't be bothered responding to you, you can't be bothered to respond to them – that you are voting for the other candidate?

### **HERE IS AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS FROM AN OLDER ADULT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE TELLING IT LIKE IT IS**

I wish I could actually thank you for the inevitably formulaic response to my concerns. I also wish that someone, anyone at the senior government level would take the time to actually READ and/or LISTEN AND RESPOND APPROPRIATELY to the concerns of seniors, not just in Ontario, but across the country.

You continue to mouth platitudes at us, wasting our money on endless repetitions of promises we have been hearing for years.

If you won't listen to us, try at least listening to the people who are tasked with delivering the non-existent services you trumpet so endlessly. I'm talking about the social workers, nurses, doctors, and other medical specialists who are on the front lines, day in day out, trying to explain to frustrated, desperate, terminally anxious clients/patients just why the system is, to quote them, "broken". I have asked every single one I have met in the past year and, without exception, this is the single word that is endlessly repeated. "Broken".

Just like the promises you make.

Home care is a myth.

Reuniting seniors with spouses in LTC, even when both are eligible for that level of care, is a joke. It doesn't happen. If or when it does, the media are immediately contacted - something that would be unnecessary if this was standard practice.

My husband was in long-term care for six years while I was still waiting to live with him again. At our age, our last home together could well have been a grave.

You have offered no assistance to aging care-givers who have no families, beyond their ailing partners. This has bankrupted us, forcing us to spend what little we have left on everything we need to buy for our partners - even medical necessities like speech or occupational therapy, dental care, and dispensary fees. You have provided absolutely no tax breaks for any of this, unless of course, we are caring for our spouses at home, and even then, the breaks are pitiful compared to the costs. What difference does location make? The costs don't change.

This has forced care-giver partners to make hard choices every day of every year - medications or food? Speech therapy or wheel-trans tickets?

You get the picture. Or, judging by your lack of action, maybe you don't. You have taken literally every penny the essentially bankrupt care-giver has, if or when they are admitted to long-term care. Both partners are then left with no choice other than to apply for a subsidy. This results in their losing everything in their bank accounts, except for a magnificent \$146.00 a month each, termed "comfort care". How many dental visits, new clothes, wheel trans tickets will that cover?

It is hard to imagine that the much touted next iteration of Local Health Integration Networks in Ontario – Ontario Health atHome - could make the situation any worse. But it likely will. When we try to contact Ontario Health teams through their websites, they are already not bothering to respond.

I would appreciate ONE, just ONE response from someone, anyone in government who has the courage to connect with seniors IN PERSON. No committees. No media photo ops. No white papers. No forums. No talking heads. No surveys, podcasts, reports - a series of actual conversations with a HUGE group of voters who face nothing but despair in their immediate futures.

I appreciate the difficulty you would face in trying to do this. But we do have Zoom now. And organizations like Seniors for Social Action Ontario, that would happily connect you to senior voters directly. The government that decides to connect with us is the government that will gain the respect and admiration of what is currently a sad, isolated, neglected, but huge segment of the population.

Your population. Your constituents.

---

*Jennifer Brown is a member of Seniors for Social Action Ontario's Editorial Committee, a writer, and former college instructor. She lives in a long-term care facility in Toronto where she continues to fight for the rights of elders*

---

SSAO welcomes your comments on our editorials at [seniorsactionontario@gmail.com](mailto:seniorsactionontario@gmail.com)