

SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION ONTARIO



Media Release

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Early Recommendations from the Ontario Commission on LTC and the Pandemic Deal with Symptoms Not Causes

In an attempt to bind the wound the Commission has bypassed the cure

Today Ontario's Long Term Care (LTC) Commission, chaired by Frank Marrocco, released "early recommendations" after meeting with some 200 individuals and over 50 groups. In a pointed letter to LTC Minister Jane Fullerton the Commission details the need for urgent action as the second wave hits LTC facilities.

These preliminary findings lead the Commission to conclude that the key to fixing the well-known broken system is to increase staffing, promote better collaboration between hospitals, health units and LTC facilities, and improve Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPAC).

The description of the pandemic's effects by residents and the well documented problems in the LTC system belies the Commission's own recommendations. Failing to identify, let alone address, the root causes of a massive systemic and personal failure to protect the health and well-being of LTC residents (over 1,900 dead) is proof that the Commission will miss the best opportunity this province has ever had to reform care and support for elderly citizens.

The true cause of the massive failure of LTC is broad and deep and includes, 1) a reliance on the institutional model of care that almost all other groups (such as people with disabilities) have dismissed, 2) the lack of appropriate funding for alternatives to institutions such as small supported housing and a home care program that works for people, 3) the advent and acceleration of the for-profit model that now controls about 60% of the LTC industry in Ontario. Capital, seeking low cost "inputs" into its bottom line, was and is a driving force for the low wage part time work force that was a large factor in the infection spread, and 4) the Inspection Branch which once had status, funding, power and influence is now a feckless bureaucracy with little effect on protecting residents.

None of the Commission's early recommendations come close to the broad and serious factors that underpin and create the still unfolding tragedy.

If the Commission continues to make the kind of recommendations that tinker with problematic symptoms instead of addressing the gross underlying difficulties no amount of staffing or pay or collaboration or new procedures will reform this horrible system. Nothing fundamental to the respect and dignity of citizens who testified at the Commission will be achieved. Nothing about the horrendous conditions documented in inspection reports for decades will change.

The early recommendations by the Commission to Minister Fullerton are a cause for real concern if true reform is the goal.