



NEWS RELEASE

**Contact: Kay Wigle (Middlesex)
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PROVINCIAL SENIOR'S ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION CALLS FOR ONTARIO'S AUDITOR GENERAL TO CONDUCT A VALUE-FOR-MONEY AUDIT INTO LONG- TERM CARE HOMES

Ontario, May 22, 2020 – Seniors For Social Action (Ontario) (SSAO), comprised of seniors with decades of policy, systemic advocacy, legislative, medical, legal, and non-profit service experience is calling on the Auditor General of Ontario to conduct a value-for-money audit of the government's spending on long-term care homes. A request has been sent to Ms. Bonnie Lysyk, Auditor General of Ontario (see attached letter).

"It is our view that the current pandemic has brought to light the longstanding substandard conditions in these facilities, and that it is now time for the Ontario government to consider more humane, age friendly alternatives to them, which would represent a more enlightened, efficient and effective use of public dollars. We are asking the Auditor General to determine whether or not an outdated institutional model still makes sense for older adults", said Steve Tennant, a systemic advocate from Perth, Ontario. "Do we really want to pour more money into a system that has been shown not to work, where older people are subject to the spread of serious infections as this pandemic has shown us?" he said.

As part of the value-for-money audit, SSAO is asking that the Auditor General review whether or not continuing to force older adults into large, impersonal long term care institutions is the best use of public funds. "Deinstitutionalization for people with developmental disabilities resulted in safer, more humane community alternatives, yet we are continuing to use an antiquated system of institutionalization for vulnerable seniors," said Kay Wigle, another long-time systemic advocate from London, Ontario. "That seems like ageism to me", she said.

SSAO is asking that the Auditor General also review how effective inspection and other accountability systems are in long term care now that Resident Quality Inspections are no longer conducted yearly for each home as the Auditor General had previously recommended.

SSAO is also asking the Auditor General to determine if there are any instances of misuse or mismanagement of public funds with respect to this system, especially with repeated staff shortages and linen and other supply shortages reported in inspection reports for long term care facilities.



May 21, 2020.

Ms Bonnie Lysyk,
Auditor General of Ontario,
Atrium on Bay Suite 1530,
20 Dundas St W,
Toronto, ON
M5G 2C2

Dear Ms. Lysyk,

We are writing to request that you conduct a value-for-money audit of the government's spending on long-term care homes in Ontario to determine how effective accountability systems are in ensuring that funds provided to these homes are used for their intended purpose. We are interested in knowing how well you believe public resources are being used, and if there are any instances of misuse or mismanagement of public funds with respect to this system.

Our concern is also whether the current funding arrangement with the long term care sector represents the best use of public funds, or whether these funds would be better redirected to not-for-profit community residential options other than for-profit and not-for-profit large institutions. We consider an institutional sector of this kind, in which primarily older adults with cognitive and physical disabilities are housed, to be discriminatory since no other group is institutionalized in these numbers in Ontario. You will recall that the 1970s and 1980s saw deinstitutionalization for both people with developmental and psychiatric disabilities, yet older adults continue to be forced to live in primarily large, impersonal, long-term care facilities where, according to inspection reports, written notices and compliance orders are common and repeated time and time again without licenses being revoked.

It is our view that the current pandemic has brought to light the longstanding substandard conditions in these facilities, and that it is now time for the Ontario government to consider more humane, age friendly alternatives to them, which would represent a more enlightened, efficient and effective use of public dollars.

We recognize that you have examined different aspects of long-term care homes in the past, most recently reviewing food and nutrition in these homes. Your findings in regard to this were compelling, and in our view underscore the need to examine whether government funds are best spent on these institutions.

We also have strong concerns about the government's recent serious restrictions on the number of inspections performed in these homes, and believe that safeguards that had once been in place through the yearly use of Resident Quality Inspections have now been reduced or removed with only 9 out of 626 facilities undergoing this type of inspection in the past year.

We believe that the lack of inspection, especially with respect to staffing, infection control, not following resident care plans or providing continuity of care has contributed to the high infection and death rates. We would appreciate your comments on this.

Thank you for considering our request,

Yours truly,

Kay Wigle,
Steve Tenant,