



NEWS RELEASE

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PROVINCIAL SENIOR'S ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION CALLS FOR AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY

Ontario, May 19, 2020 – A newly formed Provincial Seniors Advocacy Group - Seniors For Social Action (Ontario) (SSAO), comprised of seniors with decades of policy, systemic advocacy, legislative, medical, legal, and non-profit service experience is supporting the call for an Independent Public Inquiry into high infection and death rates in Ontario's long term care facilities.

“This pandemic has shone a glaring spotlight on what many advocates have known for decades – that many long term care facilities put residents at risk rather than being sanctuaries where they are well cared for”, said Paddy Bowen, an Ottawa advocate with decades long experience in the long term care system. “It is time that there was a full public inquiry into this sector, so that the depth and consequences of its failures can be brought to light and effective recommendations made to change this dysfunctional and dangerous system”, she said.

“A Review, like that proposed by the Minister of Long Term Care is not enough and would only serve to keep information from the public, and protect the interests of the multi-national companies that own many of these homes rather than the interests of the residents that reside in them” said Betty Miller an advocate with the Guardian Angels Program in Virgil, Ontario.

Kathy Pearsall, an advocate from Sudbury, and former Board Member of Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities concurs. “For decades I have seen the damage done to residents and their families in many of these facilities with one government after another failing them, refusing to act to protect them, and having little knowledge of, or regard for them. A public inquiry will allow residents, their families, their advocates, and the professionals who work in these homes and their unions to finally publicly reveal the realities of life in these institutions. The public needs and deserves to know the details. I am joining other advocates today in calling on this government to step up to the plate and follow its words of concern with action – call a public inquiry into the high infection and death rates in long term care today, and give the inquiry a broad mandate so that the actions or inaction of government, the owners, operators, and companies can all be scrutinized”, she said.

BACKGROUNDER

SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION ONTARIO (SSAO)

Who Are We?

We are older adults from across Ontario who are demanding change to the ageist attitudes and policies that have led to the unspeakable conditions and high infection and death rates in long term care institutions that came to light during the pandemic but have existed for decades.

We are a powerful voting block in Ontario, and it is time we used our electoral power to bring about long overdue systemic changes in the way we are treated in this province.

We have had enough of being paid lip service and having to tolerate being patronized by one Ontario government after another.

Objectives

1. To end the systemic discrimination of forcing thousands of elderly citizens into institutions because of a lack of community-based choices.
2. To eliminate large multi-national long term care corporations making profits from the institutionalization of disabled older adults.
3. To demand age-friendly and respectful non-profit community based residential alternatives to long term care institutions including older adults independent living communities with care hubs designed to prevent institutionalization; smaller fully staffed community congregate living arrangements for older adults with dementia and/or other disabilities; supported independent living (SIL) programs; caring communities programs on the L'Arche model; and other innovative residential alternatives of seniors' choice.
4. To ensure that Ontario and Municipal government policies, procedures, and practices are anti-ageist.
5. To insist that all parties in the Ontario legislature immediately refrain from calling for more long term care beds in order to institutionalize even more older adults and instead call for alternatives to these institutions including the residential alternatives outlined earlier and a fully funded home care program that is needs based and includes much higher levels of in-home care minus the current rigid bureaucratic infrastructure, and significantly more respite support for caregivers.
6. To institute age-friendly policies and practices in Local Health Integration Networks and Ontario hospitals and end precipitous discharges of older adults into unsafe long term care institutions or back home with inadequate home care.
7. To obtain more police investigations when crimes are committed against older adults in long term care institutions and in the community.
8. To secure commitments from all levels of government that the skills, knowledge, and experience of older adults will be taken seriously and help form the basis for policies, practices, and procedures for which they are responsible.