

Do we really want long-term care institutions delivering care to older adults living in the community? What is your opinion after reading this Editorial?



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

Editorial

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME – NURSING HOME WITHOUT WALLS PROGRAMS

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Some of you may have read a recent article in the Toronto Star by Moira Welsh about Nursing Home Without Walls programs. Another “feel good” article from the Toronto Star without due diligence to determine whether or not this program is actually “innovative” or even a good idea.

Fund Institutions and Not Non-Profit Community Agencies?

At a time when non-profit community-based seniors’ serving agencies are struggling without base budget increases or wage parity for their workers with long-term care institutional staff, and are unable to expand the services they offer because of a lack of government funding, the Ministry of Long-Term Care, and sadly, now the Waltons Trust have decided to fund institutions to provide “community care”.

Failure to Embrace Innovative Alternatives to Institutions

Instead of addressing long wait lists for institutions (because of a lack of properly funded community alternatives like home support services, non-profit, neighborhood-based, fully staffed small homes for people with dementia or complex health conditions, or seniors’ assisted living apartments with PACE Wellness Hubs built in) the Ontario government thought it would be a good idea to fund long-term care institutions to provide these services (SSAO Action Alert, September 5, 2025 <https://www.seniorsactionontario.com/storiesfromltc>). The same institutions where 4500+ people died of alleged gross negligence with class action lawsuits against them by the families of the dead. The same institutions – both non-profit and for-profit that have been unable to consistently meet legislated requirements since their inception decades ago.

Institutions Are Now “Community Centers”?

Here is an excerpt from Ms Welsh’s article – and no, you can’t make this stuff up.

“Instead of accepting the perils of isolation as a normal part of aging, the privately funded “Nursing Home Without Walls” model uses long-term care as a community

centre that provides social connections, exercise sessions or a good soak in a bathtub, said Lisa Levin, CEO of Advantage Ontario, which represents not-for-profit and municipal homes.”

Lisa Levin, who heads the lobby group AdvantAge Ontario representing the interests of non-profit institutions, hopes government will fund this program now, and of course, the Ministry of Long-Term Care has already taken a step in this direction – one that SSAO criticized not long ago as a “wrong turn”.

Here is the Minister’s spokesperson: *“Nursing Home Without Walls was one of the programs studied for its nursing home wait-list pilot project. Unlike the government’s program, Nursing Home Without Walls is aimed at older adults who may never need long-term care — especially if they are provided assistance to live independently.”*

So instead of properly funding existing non-profit organizations already delivering community support services to people “who are unlikely to ever need long-term care”, fund the long-term care institutions instead?

“Services” To Be Offered

Some of the “services” to be offered include baths in the “spa room” (bathing rooms) and foot care at the nursing home. Residents are also invited to “activities” and shared dining in order to socialize.

Do Critical Thinking and Due Diligence Still Matter in Journalism?

In an environment where critical thinking and facts appear to matter less and less in journalism, let’s examine the realities about offering “community services” in long-term care institutions that a bit of due diligence might have uncovered.

One of the “pilot projects” for this program, according to AdvantAge, is Algoma Manor Nursing Home. It touts the program as bringing “the services, expertise and supports of long-term care homes directly into the community.”

https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7457546367192928256/?dashCommentUrn=urn%3Ali%3Afsd_comment%3A%287457545540021624833%2Curn%3Ali%3Aactivity%3A7457398844025139200%29

Really?

Apparently, no one checked Algoma Manor Nursing Home’s Inspection reports.

<https://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/fr-ca/File.aspx?RecID=40914&FacilityID=21314>

Let’s all have a bath in the “spa room” in Algoma Manor where the Inspection Branch found: *“During a tour of two tub rooms, unlabeled used nail clippers, deodorants and other personal items were observed by the tub and on the tub room counter. The Director*

of Care (DOC) acknowledged the personal items should have been labelled and returned to the residents' rooms after their usage.”

I would think maybe the tub and surfaces on which the “personal items” were found could also have used a good cleaning.

Or how about a nice meal in the dining room there where the Inspection Branch found: ***“The licensee has failed to ensure that the care set out in the plan of care for residents was provided to the residents as specified in their plan. During a meal observation, two residents were served the wrong texture meal.”***

Or how about a healthy, nutritious meal in the dining room where the Inspection Branch found: ***“The licensee has failed to ensure that the menu cycle was approved for nutritional adequacy by a registered dietitian (RD) prior to being in effect. The home’s spring and summer menu was implemented in spring although the menu was not approved for nutritional adequacy by a RD as the protein content did not meet the recommended protein amount for long-term care residents, which also affected micronutrients and sodium content.”***

Readers will get the point.

Long-term care institutions have no business providing “care” to community dwelling older adults since they appear unable to meet the requirements of their own legislation.

Rather than funding nursing homes to provide “community care” perhaps both the Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Walton Trust which is helping to fund the spread of Nursing Home Without Walls programs (Healthcare Excellence Canada, May 9, 2025), should consider properly funding the non-profit community-based agencies best qualified to provide community care.

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**Comments on this and other SSAO Editorials may be sent to us at
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