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## **THE IMPACT OF FORCIBLE TRANSFERS – ONTARIO CITIZENS LIVING IN FEAR**

Help.

It was all 62 year old Deana Henry, who lives with Multiple Sclerosis and severe diabetes could manage to say after she was moved, against her wishes, from hospital to Extendicare's West End Villa in Ottawa (Charron, 2022).

The Ottawa hospital was given oversight of West End Villa and another Extendicare facility, Laurier Manor, during the pandemic to assist with a major COVID outbreak (Goodwin, 2020). West End Villa had 87 COVID cases and 11 deaths (CBC News, 2020).

This move was euphemistically described as a "partnership", but the reality is that Dr. Vera Etches, the Ottawa medical officer of health, ordered the Ottawa Hospital to take over management of both West End Villa and Laurier Manor because they had large COVID outbreaks (Payne, 2020).

A whistleblower at West End Villa alleged that staff had not received proper PPE from their employer. 26 staff tested positive for COVID. The whistleblower described staff going from one room to another caring for residents without N95 masks (Johnstone, 2020).

A complaints investigation inspection conducted over several days in June, 2021, about a year later, showed that West End Villa was still not in compliance with infection prevention and control protocols required under provincial regulation (Ministry of Long-Term Care, 2021). The facility received only a "written notice" for this transgression.

Extendicare said it was grateful for the hospital's help during the pandemic.

### **Partners?**

In spite of West End Villa's troubled history, it seems that the Ottawa Hospital is now "grateful" to Extendicare.

Irrespective of West End Villa's COVID history and staff concerns, the Ottawa hospital decided to "partner" with Extendicare to open a new 55 bed off-site transitional care unit to facilitate patients "transitioning" from hospital to long-term care. The President of the Ottawa hospital, Cameron Love, said "while in the early days of the pandemic, health-care workers supported long-term care homes in need, now long-term care homes are supporting hospitals and helping us create care capacity for the most acutely ill" (Pringle, 2021).

This is how the Ottawa hospital decided to empty its alternate level of care (ALC) beds? Transfer vulnerable people into an institution operated by a company whose residents it had to protect against infections and deaths during the pandemic, which was not complying with infection prevention protocols a year later, and whose facilities had the fourth highest death rates in Ontario (Mancini et al, 2020)?

### **Extendicare’s Track Record in Other Jurisdictions**

Extendicare had its five institutions in Saskatchewan taken over by the Saskatchewan Health Authority after deaths in its facilities there. It no longer operates in that province (Saskatchewan Health Authority, 2021; Canadian Press, 2021).

In 2014 Extendicare was investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice and forced to pay \$38 million in damages to the United States and eight states to resolve allegations that the company billed Medicare and Medicaid for “materially substandard nursing services that were so deficient that they were effectively worthless” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

### **Track Record in Ontario**

In December of 2020 the CBC reported that Extendicare received \$22.7 million from the Ontario government and another \$82.2 million from the federal government which it claims to have used for wage subsidies for its ParaMed division. The company says that it never actually used public dollars to pay its shareholders millions in dividends as the pandemic raged in Ontario and residents were dying in its facilities (Lancaster, 2020).

Extendicare managed two institutions in Ontario with among the highest death rates during the pandemic – Tendercare and Orchard Villa. An inspection of Tendercare conducted in December of 2021 shows that the facility was not “staffing according to their staffing plan” and that interviews with registered nurses and PSWs “identified that the ratio of residents to staff continued to increase as PSW staff were not being replaced when scheduled off or sick”. “Staff stated that some residents are at risk for falling without toileting assistance”. A “staffing clerk” stated “50% of the time all shifts to match to the staffing plan were unable to be filled as staff on the casual list were not available or staff were not willing to work overtime.” (Ministry of Long-Term Care, 2021).

In Orchard Villa, an inspection report dated June, 2022 revealed that a report of abuse by a resident was not reported to the Director as required by law. Inspectors also concluded “as a result of resident #004’s plan of care not being based on the post falls assessment completed on January 24, 2022, there was actual harm to resident #004, as they died as a result of the injury sustained from the fall” (Ministry of Long-Term Care, 2022).

## **Ontario Government Expands Extendicare's Operations in Ontario**

Extendicare continues to flourish in Ontario and is being awarded beds throughout the province by the Ontario government - in Durham, New Liskeard (Government of Ontario, 2022), Haliburton (Davis, 2022), Kirkland Lake (Northern News, 2022), Kapuskasing (SN News Watch, 2022), and Niagara (Drvefjall, 2022) among other areas.

This year the Ottawa Citizen reported “three private long-term care companies, including one with among the highest death rates during the pandemic, are slated to build the bulk of new and upgraded long-term care beds in Ottawa.... They include long-term care giant Extendicare, Schlegel Villages and Southbridge Care Homes, which owns Orchard Villa. The Pickering long-term care home was a focus of a scathing military report detailing neglect and suffering of residents during the pandemic after the army was called in to help” (Payne, 2022).

Orchard Villa is managed by Extendicare (Ministry of Long Term Care Inspection Report, 2022).

In July of 2021, there was a large protest in which SSAO took part, objecting to the Ford government's plans to grant the operator of Orchard Villa a 30 year license (Durham Radio News, 2021). The Official Opposition joined the protesters in calling on the government to reject an expansion proposal by the operator (Katawazi, 2021).

### **Can We Still Call Ourselves a Civilized Society?**

Imagine someone you love being coerced with threat of severe financial penalties to agree to be transported to a facility operated by a corporation with this track record?

Imagine being Deana and finding herself in this position? No wonder all she could say was “help”.

How on earth did we get here? And how are we still able to call ourselves a civilized society when all of this is allowed to go on?

Seniors for Social Action Ontario has heard Deana's cry for help and has responded.

We all need now to register our objections with our elected officials – whether or not they wish to hear them. A list of MPPs can be found here. Click on their names to obtain their contact information. <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current>

We need to make it clear to them, that this issue is not going away.

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