



## **Open Letter to Premier and Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care January 29, 2021**

Concerned Friends of Citizens in Care Facilities, a registered not-for-profit organization, has spent the past 40 years advocating for individuals living in long-term care. We stand united with the many groups including doctors voicing outrage over the government's failure to "put an iron ring around" our most vulnerable population.

The neglect, underfunding, overcrowding, and lack of appropriate government oversight of Ontario's long-term care (LTC) facilities is tragic and has unfortunately existed for decades. Sadly, the situation has only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic, which struck residents living in these facilities the hardest, resulting in thousands of needless deaths.

Our commitment today remains strong to advocate for elderly people who deserve the quality of care that we expect for ourselves. Now is the time to start the hard work needed to reform long-term care in Ontario. Concerned Friends has identified five areas of focus.

### **1. Staffing**

Over 77,000 adults living in long-term care homes represent a very complex population in terms of the level of care required to ensure their safety, dignity, respect, and individuality.

The regulated 4-hour minimum care standard needs to be implemented immediately; residents cannot wait. There needs to be an appropriate front-line staff to resident ratio within each facility that adequately and truly meets the care needs of the residents. To ensure the continuity of care there needs to be designated permanent front-line staff earning a wage with benefits, indicative of the responsibility they are providing. Funding should be tied to a staffing plan that shows permanent full and part-time staff employed with minimal movement allowed between homes. There is an urgent need for a recruitment strategy to get the desperately needed care providers into this sector.

### **2. Annual Resident Quality Inspection**

There needs to be an immediate reinstatement of the thorough comprehensive annual inspection in all LTC facilities. The stories we hear from residents' families regarding the facility failing to provide care and inspectors failure to follow up on complaints is unacceptable. The low number of Director Referrals given is appalling based on the findings of investigations. Those operators found not meeting their regulatory obligation under the Long-Term Care Act must be held accountable and fines previously being considered should be mandated. Provincial and municipal health inspectors should be deployed to assist the inspection program.

#### 4. Advisory Group

In 2008, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Compliance and Improvement Branch put together an Advisory Group where representatives from resident's councils, family councils, long-term care associations, LTC physicians, and advocacy groups like us met quarterly to provide input into the inspection program and challenges within long-term care facilities. We propose the resurrection of this group which was disbanded when your government took office. There needs to be more consultation, transparency, and accountability regarding inspections to address concerns regarding the quality of care of residents.

#### 5. Infection Control

We need better infection control programs mandated within LTC facilities. All LTC homes should be mandated to eliminate all 3 and 4 person bedrooms to improve the home's ability to control the spread of infectious diseases. The province must establish an Emergency Rapid Response task force comprised of trained infection-control health-care workers available to act immediately as emergencies are identified.

#### 6. National Standards

We need the province of Ontario to work with the government of Canada to establish a national regulatory authority with new long-term-care standards related to; ensuring humane care and residents' rights, staffing and pay levels, usage of funds, and building designs. This must include a process to receive and review all complaints and investigations from long-term-care residents.

Concerned Friends is calling on immediate measurable actions to address this crisis. We would appreciate hearing back from you with details regarding the actions and timelines our government is taking to address the long-standing issues within long-term care.

Together we can make meaningful change that will directly result in saving the lives of our most vulnerable seniors.



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