

Caregivers appeal directly to Premier: "It's Time to Care" — Give seniors 3.5 hours of hands-on care February 27, 2008

TORONTO, Ont. – Caregivers at two Ontario nursing homes speaking at a Queen's Park media conference today, appealed directly to the Premier to enact a minimum 3.5 hours of personal care for residents in long-term care facilities.



Despite repeated promises by Ontario's health minister that hands-on care would be established months after new long-term care legislation passed (Bill 140), the McGuinty government has failed to act.

"I want to bring some humanity, joy and real care to residents. But we are so understaffed that I have to rush through my tasks, rush through feedings, rush through bathing and dressing. That's not the kind of care seniors should be receiving," said Margaret Manning, a Personal Support Worker (PSW) at Vermont Square in Toronto.

Manning and Candace Rennick, a dietary aide from St. Joseph's at Fleming in Peterborough, gave a first-hand account of the challenges faced by nursing home staff trying to provide care to frail seniors under the current system, with no minimum standard of care. "With so few staff, residents wait for hours for breakfast, are put to bed too early at night, and many don't get enough walking and exercise. All the while caregivers are run off their feet trying to complete tasks," said Rennick.

Study after study has shown that, without a staffing and care standard set out in law, the quality of care plummets. Front line nursing home staff report that residents are sitting in deplorable conditions. Incontinence products are often kept under lock-and-key, and many homes are directing staff to change residents only when the product is 75% soiled.

OFL President Wayne Samuelson again called for positive action on the issue of continence care policies and practices in long-term care homes. Government inaction "demonstrates a complete lack of respect for the very individuals that built our Province." Further he said, "the solution to the issue requires regulating and enforcing minimum standards of staffing of 3.5 hours of care per resident per day. This will allow residents to receive the continence care that they need."

Just before the October 2007 election, health minister George Smitherman said that legally binding minimum standards of care could be in place within three months of the next government taking office because of the Liberal legislation passed earlier in the year.

"The Liberals have reneged on that. There were no hours of care in the legislation," said Ryan. "This is inhumane. We can't let seniors' quality of life continue to diminish while the government does another consultation process. The minister's crocodile tears just won't cut it anymore. We need more than tears. We need 3.5 hours of care and dignity back for seniors in nursing homes."

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