

## CUPE/OFL Queen's Park media conference on standards of care - February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008

<outbind://4/help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=cbcn>

<http://www.fpinfomart.ca/img/aixpubs/cbcn.gif>

Ont. health minister 'seriously considering' adult diaper test

CBC.CA News

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Section: Toronto

Time: Wed February 27 15:34:30 2008 EST

Network: CBC

Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman is debating donning an adult diaper to see if it provides enough protection for seniors in Ontario nursing homes, which some critics say lack proper care. Smitherman came under fire at Queen's Park on Wednesday from a group of union representatives who are calling on the province to pass long-promised regulations for seniors care.

They said health-care workers in nursing homes are resigning from their jobs because of shabby standards of care in provincial seniors facilities. They want the province to mandate a minimum of 3.5 hours of personal care for residents each day.

"More staff [are needed] to assist with washrooms breaks so that seniors are able to maintain their continence levels and not be forced to wear incontinence products, which are contributing to serious skin breakdowns and high, high levels of indignities," said Candace Rennick, who works at a long-term-care facility in Peterborough.

Smitherman denies the claim, saying modern incontinence products are more absorbent than they were previously.

He said Wednesday he was "seriously considering" wearing an adult diaper to ensure a decision to use them at Ontario facilities was, in fact, appropriate.

"I've got one of these incontinence products - albeit a new one, not the ones that tend to appear at committee - on my desk and I'm really giving this matter very serious contemplation," Smitherman said.

"I said, 'How does a guy like me really actually figure out what's right about all this?' " he said. "Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product or is that a front for some diminishment of care?"

His comments were disregarded by Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, who challenged the minister to "put on a diaper, and sleep in it all night long, and come into the legislature and wear it up until 12 p.m."

"Let him soil that diaper and lay around in it for the length of time that our seniors have to do in this province," said Ryan.

Premier Dalton McGuinty suggested all parties show due respect - and restraint - when discussing the topic.

"I know that it's easy to go and make fun of this particular issue, but it's really an issue of human dignity and I think we should try to keep that in mind," he said.

More front-line staff are desperately needed in seniors homes to make sure meals are served on time and keep residents mobile without resorting to wheelchairs, said Rennick, as well as to engage with them one-on-one throughout the day. "Unfortunately these small things in long-term-care facilities have become a long-lost luxury," she said.

With files from the Canadian Press

© 2008 CBC. All Rights Reserved.

Idnumber: 200802280088

Length: 450 words

<outbind://6/help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=tost>

<http://www.fpinfomart.ca/img/aixpubs/tost.gif>

Smitherman assailed for offer to don diaper

Rob Ferguson

Queen's Park Bureau

The Toronto Star

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Page: A01

Section: News

Byline: Rob Ferguson

Source: Toronto Star

Critics are branding Health Minister George Smitherman a "damned embarrassment" for his plan to wear an adult diaper as the government faces mounting criticism over nursing home residents sitting too long in their own waste.

Smitherman's suggestion yesterday came as a union whose members work in nursing homes raised alarms over a shortage of staff to help residents get to the bathroom or change their diapers more often.

"I've got one of these incontinence products ... on my desk and I'm really giving this matter very serious contemplation," Smitherman said yesterday before a cabinet meeting.

"I want to have the right policy for Ontarians."

The issue was back in the news this month when the Ontario Human Rights Commission said it's too busy to investigate complaints that some elderly nursing home patients are not being changed until their diapers reach the 75 per cent full mark.

Smitherman said incontinence products for adults have evolved in recent years and that's why he's thinking about trying one as "a matter of conscience."

"I said, 'How does a guy like me actually figure out what's right about all this? Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product, or is that a front for some diminishment of care?' he told reporters.

"But at the heart of our obligation in long-term care is to improve the number of people that work there and enhance the quality of care for residents."

Opposition politicians, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and a nursing home association said Smitherman's plan to test drive a diaper shows he doesn't understand the issue is about staffing levels - not diaper technology.

"For him to suggest that's his answer is a disgrace," said Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory.

"It's some kind of a sideshow he seems determined to put on when, in fact, I think people in Ontario would say: 'George Smitherman, do something about it. Let's see the revolution you promised in long-term care.'"

Shortly after the Liberals took power in 2003, Smitherman wiped away tears during an interview with the Toronto Star when he was shown pictures of a woman with a gangrenous bedsore that ate down to her tailbone, promising to fix problems with a "missionary zeal."

CUPE is pushing for a minimum of 3.5 hours of personal care daily per resident - an area the government has not yet set a standard for.

The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services of Seniors said the industry average is now about 2.5 hours a day and is pushing for at least 3 hours, which would cost the government about \$586 million, said chief executive officer Donna Rubin.

"I don't know what 3.5 hours represents, whether that's adequate or inadequate," said Premier Dalton McGuinty.

"I will leave that to the minister ... the minister is doing what he thinks is appropriate in the circumstances."

Smitherman's plan and McGuinty's response "shows the government just doesn't take the issues of long-term care and seniors seriously," said NDP Leader Howard Hampton.

New Democrat MPP Peter Kormos called Smitherman a "damned embarrassment" and urged him to apologize to the 77,000 residents of nursing homes in Ontario and their families for what would amount to a cheap publicity stunt.

"Mr. Smitherman is going to put on an adult diaper and, perhaps, wet himself, and then promptly take it off. Our folks and grandfolks in those facilities don't get to take them off. They sit in them day in, day out, hours at a time."

While McGuinty said the government has increased funding to put another 1, 200 nurses into the nursing home system, Rubin said that money is "just starting to flow" and has not made much of a difference on the front lines yet.

"The issue is more about how you would feel if you have to go to the washroom and someone says, 'I can't get to you, so just pee,'" Rubin said.

© 2008 Torstar Corporation

Idnumber: 200802280184

Edition: Met

Length: 654 words

<outbind://2/help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=tosn>

<<http://www.fpinfomart.ca/img/aixpubs/tosn.gif>>

Curious, George; Minister called rash for pondering road-test of adult 'super-diaper'

The Toronto Sun

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Page: 3

Section: News

Byline: BY ANTONELLA ARTUSO, QUEEN'S PARK BUREAU CHIEF

Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman says he's considering personally road-testing a new absorbent adult diaper to see if it's appropriate for the province's nursing home residents.

"As a matter of conscience, it's something that I have been seriously considering," Smitherman told reporters yesterday.

The super diapers have become a flash point in the debate around adequate staffing in long-term care facilities.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents front-line workers at long-term care facilities, has launched a campaign to urge the provincial government to mandate a minimum of 3.5 hours of personal care daily for residents.

The workers say they're being told by some of their employers to let seniors sit in these new diapers until an indicator line on the garment goes blue because there's not enough staff to ensure prompt changes.

At a media conference yesterday, two workers demonstrated how one diaper could hold four 500 mL bottles of water before the blue line appeared.

CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan said the problem is not the product, but that it's being used as an alternative to proper staffing levels.

"So if the minister wants to play silly games, let him put on a diaper and sleep in it all night long and come into the legislature and wear it until 12 o'clock, and let him soil that diaper and lay around in it for the length of time our seniors have to do in this province," Ryan said.

Ontario Federation of Labour President Wayne Samuelson said the government must enforce its policy that residents be clean and dry at all times.

"It really comes down to what kind of respect we as a society are going to show to our family members," Samuelson said.

Smitherman said he is no expert on diapers but he does want to know if they are being used to improve the quality of life for seniors or to stretch human resources. "I don't mean to be facetious about this, because the people in my office laughed at me the first three times I said it, but I said how does a guy like me really actually figure out what's right about all this," he said.

"Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product or is that a front for some diminishment of care?"

Reaction to Smitherman's comments was swift and angry.

"Smitherman's a damned embarrassment," NDP MPP Peter Kormos said. "One doesn't have to use or exhaust one's imagination to understand the humiliation, the indignity, of sitting in one's own waste for what could be hours at a time."

Kormos said Smitherman owes seniors an apology because he has trivialized the situation, and the government should immediately mandate staffing levels.

Conservative Leader John Tory said the Liberal government had promised a revolution in long-term care for seniors but has failed to follow through with election promises.

"A revolution didn't mean putting on a diaper and trying to put on a sideshow for people," Tory said.

"It's a disgrace."

Premier Dalton McGuinty said he changed diapers for seniors when he worked as an orderly to pay for his schooling.

"It's easy to make light of it," he said. "But as somebody who worked there, it's a matter of human dignity." McGuinty said his government has already increased funding for staffing at nursing homes, and remains committed to improving life for seniors.

As for his minister donning diapers, McGuinty said Smitherman is "doing what he thinks is appropriate in the circumstances."

© 2008 Sun Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

Illustration:

- 3 photos
- 1. photo of PETER KORMOS
- Embarrassment
- 2. photo of JOHN TORY
- "Disgrace"
- 3. photo by Tim Peckham, Sun Media
- How Health Minister George Smitherman may look in the adult diaper that can absorb two litres of liquid. But the diapers are not the problem, critics say: At issue are the number of hours elderly patients are being expected to wear them.

Idnumber: 200802280005

Edition: Final

Length: 580 words

<outbind://7/help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=ntgm>

Smitherman says he'll test adult diaper

The Globe and Mail

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Page: A7

Section: National News

Byline: Maria Babbage

Dateline: TORONTO

Source: The Canadian Press

TORONTO -- So serious is he about the welfare of seniors that one of Ontario's most outspoken cabinet ministers said yesterday he's prepared to don an adult diaper - and use it - to satisfy himself that elderly residents of the province's nursing homes are getting appropriate care.

Health Minister George Smitherman sent eyebrows skyward when he made the straight-faced suggestion in response to critics who say the standard of care in Ontario nursing homes is so bad that residents spend too long wallowing in soiled diapers.

Those complaints have prompted him to "seriously consider" taking one of the diapers commonly used in Ontario nursing homes out for a test run.

The bizarre remarks sparked outrage among opposition parties and lobby groups who advocate for better standards in the province's long-term care facilities.

Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory called Mr. Smitherman's comments a "disgrace."

Soiled diapers aren't the only problems, caregivers who work in nursing homes say. Some facilities are so short-staffed, residents are forced to wait for hours for meals, are put to bed too early and aren't getting enough exercise.

Mr. Smitherman promised that legally binding minimum standards of care for residents in nursing homes could be established within months of the Liberals taking office following the election, but that hasn't happened, said Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

© 2008 CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Idnumber: 200802280055

Length: 229 words

<outbind://7/help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=wbnw>

Ontario Audio at 11:45 a.m. 27-02-08

The Canadian Press – Broadcast Wire

Wed 27 Feb 2008

Section: Audio Schedules

R10 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--18s Health Minister George Smitherman says he's ``seriously considering" wearing an adult diaper to see if it's adequate for Ontario seniors. He's responding to complaints that Ontario seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because nursing homes in the province aren't meeting proper standards of care.

(`...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smitherman's proposal is a "silly game" and called on the minister to start living up to government promises to improve care for residents in long-term care facilities.

R11 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--18s Health Minister George Smitherman says he's prepared to don an adult diaper to see if it's good enough for Ontario seniors in long-term care facilities. He's responding to complaints that seniors in nursing homes are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because they aren't receiving proper standards of care.

(`...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smitherman's proposal as "silly games" and called on the government to start living up to its promises to improve standards in long-term care facilities.

R12 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--16s. Nursing home care activists are dismissing Health Minister George Smitherman's proposal to don an adult diaper to see if it's good enough for Ontario seniors. The minister is responding to complaints that seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because they aren't receiving proper standards of care. But CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smithman is missing the point.

(`...soiled diapers.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Smitherman says he's prepared to try out the more absorbent incontinence products used in the province's nursing homes in order to examine concerns raised about seniors' care.

R13 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--16s. Nursing home care activists are dismissing Health Minister George Smitherman's proposal to don an adult diaper to see if it's good enough for Ontario seniors. The minister is responding to complaints that seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because they aren't receiving proper standards of care. But CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smithman is missing the point.

(`...this province.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Ryan is calling on the government to start living up to its promises, including enacting a minimum 3.5 hours of personal care for residents in long-term care facilities.

R14 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--15s Health Minister George Smitherman says he's prepared to try out an adult diaper to see if it's adequate for Ontario seniors. He's responding to complaints that Ontario seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because nursing homes in the province aren't meeting proper standards of care. But N-D-P Leader Howard Hampton says it's just a stunt.

(`...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan dismissed Smitherman's proposal as "silly games" and called the government to live up to its promises to improve care for residents in long-term care facilities.

R15 - (Winter-Potholes)

TORONTO (Alan Black) 28s. Ontario's transportation minister says he's doing his best to patch up the potholes on 400-series highways. (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

R16 - (Winter-Potholes)

TORONTO. x--11s. Transportation Minister Jim Bradley says the province is working as fast as it can to fill those pesky winter potholes that seem to be cropping up on Ontario highways. Bradley says the province's harsh winter has meant that there are more potholes than usual on 400-series highways.

(`...after them.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Bradley says filling the extra potholes is going to cost the province more this year but he says it's worth it.

R17 - (Winter-Potholes)

TORONTO. x--16s. This winter is going to be more expensive for the province because it's produced many more potholes on highways and roads. Transportation Minister Jim Bradley says this winter's constant freezing and melting has put a strain on roads across Ontario.

(`...to encounter.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Bradley says his repair crews are going to target these sinkholes as soon as possible because nobody likes to hit those potholes.

R18 - (Fedbudget-Ontario)

TORONTO. x--14s. The war of words between Ottawa and Ontario seems to be heating up again over the province's struggling economy. Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan is dismissing suggestions that Ontario could become a have-not province under the Liberals' watch.

(`...Canada's economy.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Duncan, who called Tuesday's federal budget disappointing, says there's no evidence to support the notion that Canada's largest province will become a have-not province.

Idnumber: 200802270246

Length: 739 words

<outbind://7/help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=otsn>

Nappies time for George?

The Ottawa Sun

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Page: 20

Section: News

Byline: BY CP

Dateline: TORONTO

Health Minister George Smitherman says he's "seriously considering" wearing an adult diaper to see if it's adequate for Ontario seniors.

He was responding to complaints that Ontario seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because nursing homes in the province aren't meeting proper standards of care.

Smitherman says there's been an evolution in incontinence products which makes them more absorbent and that a decision was made to use them across the province's system.

He says he is looking into concerns raised about the use of the products.

CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan dismissed Smitherman's proposal as "silly games."

He's calling on the minister to enact a minimum 3.5 hours of personal care for residents in long-term care facilities.

© 2008 Sun Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

Illustration:

- file photo
- Provincial Health Minister George Smitherman says he would consider wearing an adult diaper to gauge their suitability for nursing home residents.

Idnumber: 200802280033

Edition: Final

Length: 120 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=wsns>

Minister is ``seriously considering'' diaper test  
CanWest News Service  
Wed 27 Feb 2008  
Byline: Jordana Huber  
Dateline: TORONTO  
Source: Canwest News Service

TORONTO - Ontario's Health Minister said he cannot rely on clinical data to decide whether adult diapers are adequate for seniors living in nursing homes and said he is ``seriously considering'' trying one out for a day to gain more perspective.

George Smitherman said he wants to "better understand the patient experience" by donning the incontinence diaper following complaints from nursing home staff about residents being forced to wear soiled diapers for much of the day because there are not enough caregivers to change them. The minister said in recent years there has been an ``evolution" in incontinence products that has resulted in larger capacity diapers.

But he said in light of the concerns raised, he was trying to ``figure out" whether that was a good thing. ``Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product?" asked Smitherman. ``Or is that a front for some diminishment of care? We certainly see it as the former."

Smitherman said the incontinence diapers were more expensive but said he believed they were ``implemented with good intent".

However, he added he would give the matter ``serious contemplation."

The unionized caregivers, who are calling for a minimum 3.5 hours of care each day for residents said the minister does not need to put on a diaper to figure out the answer.

Staging a demonstration at Queen's Park of a diaper's capacity - by pouring four 500ml bottles of water into it - they said the ``dignity" of seniors is being stripped as they languish in the soiled products.

They argued parents would never seek out a diaper that would make an infant sit for extra hours.

``The issue isn't how much a diaper holds," said Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. ``The issue is do you have enough people to make sure you can change them?"

NDP Leader Howard Hampton said Smitherman was taking a ``flippant approach" to what is a ``really serious issue."

Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory said the minister's response was a ``disgrace."

``It is some kind of a side show he seems determined to put on."

But Premier Dalton McGuinty said he personally recognized the seriousness of the diaper issue having once worked as an orderly changing diapers for seniors in care.

``I know where of I speak, when it comes to this particular kind of issue," McGuinty said.

The premier said his government was working on improving standards of care but was non-committal on whether he would provide funding for 3.5 hours - up from just under the current three hours.

Idnumber: 200802270073

Story Type: News

Length: 426 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=wbw>

INDEX:Advisories

The Canadian Press – Broadcast Wire



Wed 27 Feb 2008

Section: Audio Schedules

158 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--18s. Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman says he's seriously considering wearing an adult diaper to see if it's adequate for Ontario seniors. He's responding to complaints that Ontario seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because nursing homes in the province aren't meeting proper standards of care.

(`...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (345p)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smitherman's proposal is a ``silly game" and called on the minister to start living up to government promises to improve care for residents in long-term care facilities.

159 - (EU-Microsoft)

LONDON (Tom Rivers) 26s. A record fine has been slapped on Microsoft by the European Union.

(SOURCE:ABC) (345p)

Idnumber: 200802270364

Length: 114 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=wbnw>

Ontario Audio at 11:45 a.m. 27-02-08

The Canadian Press – Broadcast Wire

Wed 27 Feb 2008

Section: Audio Schedules

R10 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--18s Health Minister George Smitherman says he's ``seriously considering" wearing an adult diaper to see if it's adequate for Ontario seniors. He's responding to complaints that Ontario seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because nursing homes in the province aren't meeting proper standards of care.

(`...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smitherman's proposal is a ``silly game" and called on the minister to start living up to government promises to improve care for residents in long-term care facilities.

R11 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--18s Health Minister George Smitherman says he's prepared to don an adult diaper to see if it's good enough for Ontario seniors in long-term care facilities. He's responding to complaints that seniors in nursing homes are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because they aren't receiving proper standards of care.

(`...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smitherman's proposal as ``silly games" and called on the government to start living up to its promises to improve standards in long-term care facilities.

R12 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--16s. Nursing home care activists are dismissing Health Minister George Smitherman's proposal to don an adult diaper to see if it's good enough for Ontario seniors. The minister is responding

to complaints that seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because they aren't receiving proper standards of care. But CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smithman is missing the point. ("...soiled diapers.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Smitherman says he's prepared to try out the more absorbent incontinence products used in the province's nursing homes in order to examine concerns raised about seniors' care.

R13 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--16s. Nursing home care activists are dismissing Health Minister George Smitherman's proposal to don an adult diaper to see if it's good enough for Ontario seniors. The minister is responding to complaints that seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because they aren't receiving proper standards of care. But CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan says Smithman is missing the point. ("...this province.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Ryan is calling on the government to start living up to its promises, including enacting a minimum 3.5 hours of personal care for residents in long-term care facilities.

R14 - (Smitherman-Seniors-Diaper)

TORONTO. x--15s Health Minister George Smitherman says he's prepared to try out an adult diaper to see if it's adequate for Ontario seniors. He's responding to complaints that Ontario seniors are wearing soiled diapers for hours on end because nursing homes in the province aren't meeting proper standards of care. But N-D-P Leader Howard Hampton says it's just a stunt. ("...of care.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan dismissed Smitherman's proposal as "silly games" and called the government to live up to its promises to improve care for residents in long-term care facilities.

TORONTO. x--14s. The war of words between Ottawa and Ontario seems to be heating up again over the province's struggling economy. Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan is dismissing suggestions that Ontario could become a have-not province under the Liberals' watch. ("...Canada's economy.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (1145a)

TAG: Duncan, who called Tuesday's federal budget disappointing, says there's no evidence to support the notion that Canada's largest province will become a have-not province.

Idnumber: 200802270246

Length: 739 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=wcpa>

Ontario health minister sparks outrage with offer to test out adult diapers

The Canadian Press

Wed 27 Feb 2008

Section: National General News

Byline: BY MARIA BABBAGE

TORONTO\_ So serious is he about the welfare of seniors, one of Ontario's most outspoken cabinet ministers said Wednesday he's prepared to don an adult diaper\_ and use it\_ to satisfy himself that elderly residents of the province's nursing homes are getting appropriate care.

Health Minister George Smitherman sent eyebrows skyward when he made the straight-faced suggestion in response to critics who say the standard of care in Ontario nursing homes is so bad, residents are spending hours on end wallowing in soiled diapers.

Those complaints have prompted him to "seriously consider" taking one of the diapers commonly used in Ontario nursing homes out for a test run.

"I've got one of these incontinence products\_ albeit a new one, not the ones that tend to appear at committee\_ on my desk and I'm really giving this matter very serious contemplation," Smitherman told a group of wide-eyed reporters.

"I want to have the right policy for Ontarians."

The bizarre remarks sparked outrage among opposition parties and lobby groups who advocate for better standards in the province's long-term care facilities. The minister is making a farce out of serious questions about the dignity afforded seniors in Ontario, they charged.

"Smitherman's a damned embarrassment," said NDP critic Peter Kormos, whose leader Howard Hampton made an impassioned plea for seniors during the election campaign last fall.

"One doesn't have to use or exhaust one's imagination to understand the humiliation, the indignity of sitting in one's own waste for what could be hours at a time."

Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory called Smitherman's comments a "disgrace."

"It's some kind of a sideshow he seems determined to put on when, in fact, I think people in Ontario would say, 'George Smitherman, do something about it.'"

Premier Dalton McGuinty defended his minister, saying Smitherman was only doing what he felt was appropriate "under the circumstances."

"I know where some of you may want to go with this issue and if you mention that particular word, it can draw guffaws and it's easy to make light of it," said McGuinty, who worked as an orderly before heading to university.

"I think what we all need to do is remind ourselves that this is a matter of human dignity. If this was your mother or your father or your husband, you'd see it as such."

Smitherman explained that his unorthodox proposal was intended to gain a better understanding of an issue he didn't comprehend fully.

Products designed to help adults deal with incontinence have undergone an "evolution" in recent years and have become more absorbent, making them an invaluable tool in improving the quality of life for elderly people, he said.

Some of his staff laughed at him "the first three times" he talked about the idea, but Smitherman insisted the matter is no joke.

"I said, 'How does a guy like me really actually figure out what's right about all this?'" he said. "Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product or is that a front for some diminishment of care?"

The furor over his remarks appeared to overshadow calls for better care\_ calls the government has yet to answer. The indignity suffered by seniors forced to sit in soiled diapers only scratches the surface of what's wrong in Ontario nursing homes, critics say.

Some facilities are so short-staffed, residents are forced to wait for hours for meals, are put to bed too early and aren't getting enough exercise, said caregivers who work in nursing homes.

Smitherman promised that legally binding minimum standards of care for residents in nursing homes could be established within months of the Liberals taking office following the election, but that hasn't happened, said Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

"If the minister wants to play silly games, well then, let him put on a diaper and sleep in it all night long and come into the legislature and wear it up until 12 o'clock," said Ryan, whose union represents nursing-home workers.

"Let him soil that diaper and lay around in it for the length of time that our seniors have to do in this province."

Smitherman said the province is improving care in nursing homes, pointing to recent improvements in meals and an additional 2.3 million hours of nursing care allocated to long-term residents.

But McGuinty wouldn't commit to CUPE's demand for a minimum 3.5 hours for resident care. "I don't know what three-and-a-half hours represents, whether that's adequate or inadequate," he said.  
Copyright © 2008 The Canadian Press

Idnumber: 200802270470

Length: 757 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=sirf>

Smitherman willing to try adult diaper to address nursing home care concerns; Union Says Lack of Staff Is Problem, Not Products

Simcoe Reformer

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Page: 5

Section: News

Byline: BY MARIA BABBAGE, CP

Dateline: Toronto

So serious is he about the welfare of seniors, Ontario's health minister said Wednesday he's prepared to don an adult diaper -- and use it -- to satisfy himself that elderly residents of the province's nursing homes are getting appropriate care.

George Smitherman sent eyebrows skyward when he made the straight-faced suggestion in response to critics who say the standard of care in Ontario nursing homes is so bad, residents are being left to wallow in soiled diapers for hours on end.

Products to help adults deal with incontinence have undergone an "evolution" in recent years and have become more absorbent, making them an invaluable tool in improving the quality of life for elderly people, Smitherman said.

He said complaints that seniors are wearing soiled diapers for extended periods of time have prompted him to "seriously consider" trying out one of the adult diapers that are commonly used in Ontario nursing homes.

"I've got one of these incontinence products - albeit a new one, not the ones that tend to appear at committee - on my desk and I'm really giving this matter very serious contemplation," Smitherman said.

"I want to have the right policy for Ontarians."

He said some of his staff laughed at him "the first three times" he talked about the idea, but Smitherman insisted the matter is no joke.

"I said, 'How does a guy like me really actually figure out what's right about all this?'" he said. "Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product or is that a front for some diminishment of care?"

Smitherman's bizarre test of policy was dismissed by Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents nursing-home workers, who said the minister is completely missing the point.

The problem isn't the products, but residents in long-term care facilities who are forced to wear soiled diapers through the night and sometimes up until noon the next day, he said.

"If the minister wants to play silly games, well then, let him put on a diaper and sleep in it all night long and come into the legislature and wear it up until 12 o'clock," Ryan said.

"Let him soil that diaper and lay around in it for the length of time that our seniors have to do in this province."

Flanked by caregivers who work in Ontario nursing homes, Ryan called on the government to live up to its promises and enact a minimum 3.5 hours of personal care for residents.

Smitherman promised that hands-on care would be established months after new long-term care legislation passed, but the Liberal government has failed to act, he said.

Ontario nursing homes are so short-staffed, residents are forced to wait for hours for meals, are being put to bed too early at night and aren't getting enough exercise, the group charged.

© 2008 Sun Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

Idnumber: 200802280020

Edition: Final

Length: 478 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=vapr>

Ont. health minister says he may test diaper capacity himself

The Vancouver Province

Thu 28 Feb 2008

Page: A23

Section: News

Byline: Jordana Huber

Dateline: TORONTO

Source: Canwest News Service

TORONTO -- Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman said he cannot rely on clinical data to decide whether adult diapers are adequate for nursing-home seniors so will "seriously consider" trying one out for a day.

Smitherman said he wants to "better understand the patient experience" by donning an incontinence diaper following complaints from nursing-home staff about residents being forced to wear soiled diapers for much of the day because there are not enough caregivers to change them.

"Is a product that offers greater absorption capability an appropriate product?" asked Smitherman. "Or is that a front for some diminishment of care? We certainly see it as the former."

Smitherman said the incontinence diapers were more expensive but said he believed they were "implemented with good intent."

The unionized caregivers, who are calling for a minimum 3 1/2 hours of care each day for residents, said the minister does not need to put on a diaper to figure out the answer.

Staging a demonstration of a diaper's capacity -- by pouring four half-litre bottles of water into it -- they said the "dignity" of seniors is being stripped as they languish in the soiled products.

They argued parents would never seek out a diaper that would allow an infant to sit for extra hours in it.

"The issue isn't how much a diaper holds," said Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. "The issue is do you have enough people to make sure you can change them?"

NDP Leader Howard Hampton said Smitherman was taking a "flippant approach" to what is a "really serious issue."

Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory said the minister's response was a "disgrace."

"It is some kind of a sideshow he seems determined to put on."

Premier Dalton McGuinty said the government was working on improving standards of care but was noncommittal on whether he would provide funding for 3 1/2 hours -- up from just under the current three hours.

Idnumber: 200802280043  
Edition: Final  
Story Type: News  
Length: 322 words

</help/help\_db\_details.php?db\_code=hbsp>  
Minister's diaper test all wet, critics say  
Hamilton Spectator  
Thu 28 Feb 2008  
Page: A1  
Section: Local  
Byline: Rob Ferguson  
Dateline: TORONTO  
Source: Toronto Star

Critics are branding Health Minister George Smitherman a "damned embarrassment" for his plan to try an adult diaper as the government faces mounting criticism over nursing home residents sitting too long in their own waste.

Smitherman signalled his intentions yesterday as a union raised alarms over a shortage of personal care workers and nurses to help nursing home residents get to the bathroom on time or change their diapers more often.

"I've got one of these incontinence products on my desk and I'm really giving this matter very serious contemplation," he said.

The issue came back into the news earlier this month when the Ontario Human Rights Commission said it's too busy to investigate complaints that some elderly nursing home patients are being left soaking in diapers until they reach the 75 per cent full mark.

Smitherman said incontinence products for adults have evolved in recent years and that's why he's thinking about trying one as "a matter of conscience."

Opposition politicians, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and a nursing home association said Smitherman's plan to test drive a diaper shows he doesn't understand the issue is about staffing levels -- not diaper technology.

CUPE wants a minimum of 3.5 hours of care daily for each resident -- an area where the government has not yet set a standard.

© 2008 Torstar Corporation

Idnumber: 200802280002  
Edition: Final  
Story Type: News  
Length: 220 words