

Long-term care make pitch for funding

Sarnia Observer (ON)
Sat 01 Mar 2008
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Section: Front
Byline: DAN McCAFFERY
Source: The Observer

Sarnia's long-term care homes need more money if they're going to maintain current levels of service.

Representatives from five local facilities delivered that message Friday to Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey.

Bailey was presented with 600 signed postcards asking him to support another \$513 million in provincial funding for seniors homes across the province.

Thousands of similar postcards were given to MPPs as part of a provincewide effort by the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

"We are asking our MPP to tell it like it is to Queen's Park," said Heather Martin, administrator of Vision Nursing Home on Wellington Street. "The home and the staff stretch current **government** funding as far as they can, but the fact remains that it is not enough."

She added homes need more support workers to do everything from helping residents with their meals to going to the bathroom.

"We also need to increase funding to maintain housekeeping, laundry and maintenance services," she said.

Martin said the homes are taking care of residents who are older and frailer than was the case in the past.

"Funding that maintains existing service levels or addresses a single issue is Band-aid funding that leaves other critical resident needs unmet," she said.

Vision Nursing Home, Sumac Lodge, Afton Park Place, Twin Lakes Terrace and Trillium Villa provide care and services to more than 500 local residents.

If the province comes through with all the funding requested, it's estimated the Sarnia homes could add another 10 workers.

Bailey promised to do what he can to obtain the extra money.

Seniors in the homes "built this province, built this city and in many ways are still contributing," he said. "The least we can do is pressure the **government**."

Bailey also took a shot at Health Minister George **Smitherman** for saying he's considering personally road-testing a new absorbent adult diaper to see if it's appropriate for the province's nursing home residents.

"He apologized, but if he worked for me, he'd have been fired," Bailey said.

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Illustration:

- Heather Martin, administrator of Vision Nursing Home, left, Sarnia- Lambton MPP Bob Bailey and Anne Hillier, administrator of Afton Park Place, discuss the need for more provincial funding for Sarnia's long-term care homes during an event held at Vision Friday morning.

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Stunt shows disregard for seniors' plight

Belleville Intelligencer (ON)
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Health Minister George **Smitherman** has spent most of the last bit of this week apologizing for his stupendously silly remarks about donning a diaper to see how seniors feel when left to sit in their own waste in nursing homes in Ontario.

He started off the apologies on a Toronto phone-in show Thursday morning and everyone in his party and **government** continues to run for cover after his ill- advised remarks.

Premier Dalton McGuinty defended **Smitherman's** pronouncements on long-term care - presumably including his diaper remarks - as appropriate "under the circumstances."

In defending **Smitherman's** stunt, the premier took a swipe at the messenger - the media to whom the minister made his boast.

"I know where some of you may want to go with this issue," he said to reporters, "and if you mention that particular word, it can draw guffaws and it's easy to make light of it.

"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."

Rather than admonishing the media, McGuinty should remind **Smitherman** about overstepping the bounds of decency and compassion expected of a minister of the Crown.

Smitherman showed appallingly bad judgment in the face of a very serious issue by suggesting the latest design in adult diapers can't be too bad, they've made a lot of progress in absorbency.

Smitherman was knocked from pillar to post for his seemingly flip response to a serious matter - and rightly so - from all corners, including opposition parties, unions representing public health care employees and nursing home associations.

"**Smitherman's** a damned embarrassment," said NDP critic Peter Kormos. "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."

Smitherman's apology shouldn't be enough for someone who has shown such ongoing and blatant disregard for the serious challenges facing long-term care in this province.

He ought to be taken up on his suggestion to test such a diaper. In fact, leave him in it for at least 24 hours to thoroughly soil himself and see how it feels to go about his day,

only having the opportunity to change his diaper after a few hours, as has been cited in some seniors care investigations.

This, after all, is the minister who, after the Liberals took power in 2003, teared up when he saw photographs of a bed-ridden woman who had been left too long in a nursing home bed to the point where a gangrenous sore had eaten through to the bone. At the time, he said he would pursue the issue of nursing home care with "missionary zeal." Now his zeal is replaced with the notion of donning a diaper to see how it feels or works.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is seeking provincial policy that calls for a minimum of 3.5 hours of personal care daily for each resident of a nursing home or long-term care facility.

The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services of Seniors said the industry average is now about 2.5 hours. It's estimated bringing the average care hour total up to three would cost the **government** about \$586 million.

Donna Rubin, chief executive officer of the provincial association, said **Smitherman** clearly is not getting the message.

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

It goes deeper than even that. It goes to a minister and a **government** that continue to downplay the pressing needs of long-term care in Ontario and the cascading effects those needs have on the rest of the health care system.

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Seniors facilities press MPP

Orillia Packet and Times (ON)
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Byline: Courtney Whalen

A stack of signed postcards in hopes of a stack of cash in return.

Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop was presented Friday with more than 400 postcards signed by residents, family and staff of three of the region's long-term-care facilities for presentation to the provincial legislature.

It's part of a campaign spearheaded by the Ontario Long-Term-Care Association in hopes of getting \$513 million earmarked for long-term-care homes in the 2008 budget.

The money is needed for staffing and supply needs.

Coming on the heels of Health Minister George **Smitherman's** controversial comment about wearing an adult diaper, the first thing Dunlop did after accepting the signed cards from representatives of Orillia's Leisureworld Caregiving Centre and Leacock Care Centre, plus Midland's Villa Care Centre, was offer an apology.

"In a non-partisan way, I want to apologize for the comments of the health minister," he said.

Marilyn Hauser from Leacock Care Centre slammed **Smitherman** for his remarks: "If he thinks it's funny to wear a diaper... if that's his take on things, I wonder how seriously he can take (his position)."

"I'm embarrassed by that kind of comment," Dunlop said later of **Smitherman**. "To me, it's very demeaning to the people who have to wear them and the people who work with the residents."

He said the signed cards will be presented to either **Smitherman** or Premier Dalton McGuinty when the legislature resumes.

With 37 years in the health-care system, Annemarie Welch's latest position is as director of care at Leisureworld. She said extra funding for staff would mean less time constraints and a chance to give more personal care to residents.

"We really want to know that person," she said. "We want to be able to look in their eyes and know them."

Staff members are also facing more residents with varying needs and complex health issues, both physical and mental.

"We've got to get these supports in place now," said Dunlop, pointing to the growing senior population. "There has to be a high priority put on this because next it's my generation, the baby boomers, who are looking at retirement and where we'll be down the road."

Leisureworld resident Royal Taylor presented that facility's signed cards to Dunlop.

He's lived at the care centre for just over a year and said while he finds the care excellent, there is one noticeable gap.

"One of the biggest problems I observe is the difficulty in getting substitute staff when someone calls in sick or is away," he said. "The main thing is if funding could help with that gap."

For Welch, there's a simple formula.

"Happy staff means happy residents means happy families," she said. "We want to keep people in a state of dignity and self-worth."

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Illustration:

• Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop, left, accepts a bundle of signed postcards from Royal Taylor, Leisureworld Care Centre's resident council president, while staffer Jen Errico looks on. Long-term-care facilities across the province took part in a campaign lobbying the **government** for an increase in funding.

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Desperate ailments and desperate measures

The Globe and Mail
Sat 01 Mar 2008
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Byline: Christie Blatchford
Source: cblatchford@globeandmail.com

If the week past was an ignoble one for Canadian politicians - the lowlight the Ontario Health Minister, George **Smitherman**, musing aloud about a disgraceful stunt in which he proposed wearing a diaper in order to show his empathy for those elderly residents of nursing homes who are left to stew in their own waste, but which demonstrated only that he had none - it hasn't a patch on what happened in the latter part of May, 2005.

Of interest now, of course, is the story of what the Conservatives, then in Opposition, offered or didn't offer to the late Chuck Cadman, the principled independent member of Parliament who stood with the Paul Martin **government** in a May 19 confidence vote.

The RCMP has been asked by the Liberals to investigate allegations made by Mr. Cadman's widow Dona - originally to author Tom Zytaruk in his soon-to-be- released biography of Mr. Cadman and reiterated to reporters this week - that two senior Conservatives offered her dying husband a \$1-million life-insurance policy in exchange for his vote against the Liberal budget.

"That [policy] was on him," Ms. Cadman told Mr. Zytaruk, "so that if he died, I'd get the million dollars. There was a few other things thrown in there too, but it was the million-dollar policy that just pissed him right off." According to the book, Mr. Cadman tossed the Conservative representatives out of his office. "He came home and was mad," Ms. Cadman said in the book. "He just said that he was insulted and that he was ashamed to have been a part of the Conservative Party."

That description - of a proud man coming home hugely repelled and feeling in need of a shower and telling the wife about it - rather has the old ring of truth, doesn't it?

And Ms. Cadman, remember, is now the Conservative candidate in the Surrey North riding once held by her husband. Presumably, she is hardly spoiling for a fight with the party, yet, showing the same spirit as her late husband, neither is she backing down.

Now, the Conservatives are denying the allegation, though mercifully they have stopped short of calling the widow Cadman a liar.

And there are suggestions that the author's tape of an interview with then- Conservative Leader Stephen Harper - in which Mr. Harper acknowledged knowing about various offers to Mr. Cadman but said the only mention of money he knew about was to address some "financial insecurity" Mr. Cadman may have had about an election, but certainly appeared to have given the approach his blessing, though he personally thought it wasn't going to work - may have been edited.

Sound familiar? Well, that's because it is.

You may remember another round of stories, in precisely the same time period, involving another allegedly improper offer to another politician in order to secure his vote on the same budget, another tape recording that was released and other claims that the tape had been edited or doctored.

But in that seedy bit of business, it was then-Conservative MP Gurmant Grewal who was on the receiving end, and then-health minister Ujjal Dosanjh, and Tim Murphy, then-chief of staff to Prime Minister Paul Martin, who were making the approach.

Though the RCMP interviewed the relevant players, its investigators concluded a criminal investigation wasn't warranted; the federal ethics commissioner later cleared Mr. Dosanjh of having offered specific rewards to Mr. Grewal if he changed his vote, curiously reserving his harshest criticism for Mr. Grewal for having secretly taped his conversations with Mr. Dosanjh and Mr. Murphy, and a forensic expert hired by The Globe and Mail who examined the tapes and determined they likely were altered.

Inarguably, though, what Mr. Grewal released of the tapes certainly painted a vivid picture of a series of chummy clandestine meetings with Mr. Dosanjh and Mr. Murphy, with Mr. Grewal revealing himself as an astonishing, self-aggrandizing egotist and his new Liberal friends as obsequiously flattering. And they all had a good belly laugh or two, understanding between the lines of their conversation exactly what they all understood was going on.

At one point, Mr. Dosanjh, speaking about what might be done for Mr. Grewal, said: "Nobody will make you totally blunt promises, because that is not done in politics, usually. [But] cabinet right away may be possible." At another, he said, "You have to be able to say that 'I did not make a deal.' That's very important. That's why this kind of deals are not made in that fashion." And at yet another, Mr. Dosanjh said, "I'm sure rewards are there at some point, right. No one can forget such gestures but they require a certain degree of deniability."

Or, as Mr. Murphy put it once: "As you will see, the PM will say we are not offering and making no offers. And I think that is the narrative, we have to stick to it. Or make the PM a liar."

Mr. Grewal was no Chuck Cadman: He was either genuinely putting himself up for sale, or, as he claimed, setting up Mr. Dosanjh and Mr. Murphy in a self-styled "sting."

In the end, Mr. Cadman stayed true to his course, as always he did. Mr. Grewal neither crossed the floor nor abstained nor kept his mouth shut, nor was he given the boot by the Conservatives, though he had the good sense not to seek re-election.

The Liberals won that squeaker of a vote because of, remember her, Belinda Stronach, who on May 17 ditched her then-boyfriend Peter MacKay and defected to the Liberals,

immediately moving into cabinet as Mr. Martin's minister in charge of democratic renewal and swiftly hectoring the country with this: "Let me say I'm very proud to undertake this role, to bring greater ethics, because without ethics, that's the foundation - that's our moral fibre."

It was an entirely disreputable month, in other words, with one party desperate to cling to power and the other in a fever to get it and people from both sides behaving so badly that in the circumstances, offering a dying man the chance to leave his family well-fixed wouldn't have seemed so very outrageous.

If only these clowns would sit in their own waste for a time, instead of making the rest of us wade in it.

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• Illustration

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Donning diaper an affront

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Source: Windsor Star

How fortunate for George **Smitherman** that he isn't the federal minister of defence. Otherwise, he'd be strapping a scud missile to his back instead of walking around in an adult diaper for a day.

The provincial health minister decided last week that clinical data is no match for his bladder, so he's seriously considering donning a "larger-capacity" diaper to see if it adequately meets the needs of seniors living in nursing homes.

This comes after complaints that Ontario's nursing homes are understaffed and unable to change their clients in a timely fashion. To compensate, they employ super-absorbent, leak-proof materials that keep beds dry, but at the same time keep seniors languishing in their own waste for hours at a time.

Smitherman's generous offer drew gasps of disbelief from one end of the province to the other.

In the legislature, NDP Leader Howard Hampton said the minister had taken a "flippant approach" to a serious issue, and the Conservatives' John Tory likened it to a sideshow.

How right they are, and what an affront to those who need nursing care and those who provide it.

Ontario's seniors don't need a demonstration from the honourable minister. They need the **government** to come up with a funding formula that meets the needs of residents and acknowledges that those needs will only continue to increase as the population ages.

But if Mr. **Smitherman** is still determined to wear something new, we suggest a thinking cap.

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Long-term health care important to all of us

Woodstock Sentinel-Review
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Byline: BY GEOFF DALE

Throwing support behind any movement, irrespective of how appealing the goal may sound at the onset, generally requires a great deal of measured thought.

A primary consideration is weighing those proverbial pros and cons while ensuring support isn't just a synonym for finding yet another axe to grind.

So when it came time to adding my John Henry to a petition currently being circulated by the Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA) -- an impassioned plea for increased funding for more long-term health care throughout Ontario - there was neither question nor a moment of hesitation.

Certainly the call for an additional \$513 million in the upcoming 2008 provincial budget may sound to many a tad steep a first glance. But this is far from a frivolous request.

In fact, such a substantive hike in **government** spending would have an immediate and meaningful impact on 75,000 elderly Ontarians already in long-term health care facilities.

In Oxford County, the money translates into much-needed and improved benefits for anywhere between 800 and 1,000 residents currently living in about nine such facilities. That's a sizable number and likely to increase dramatically in the coming years.

The hike would subsequently assist their families, improve a variety of services in these facilities, like housekeeping and maintenance, reduce the strain on clogged hospital emergency rooms, lighten the load to some degree on already overburdened facility staff and, ultimately, send a clear signal to our steadily aging population about **government** commitment, both present and in the future.

Statistics don't lie and while I hesitate to fall back on such over-used cliches like that, these are simple facts.

Under the current fiscal arrangements, facility staffers can only provide about 2.6 hours of health care per resident daily. The OLTCA's proposed increase would see that jump to three hours.

So why do I feel the sudden need to enter the fray in such a public fashion?

Simple. My mother has been a resident of PeopleCare in Tavistock for about two years. Moving her there, after a serious fall and subsequent family discussion, was the most difficult decision I have ever had to make and one that I lost sleep over prior to, during and even after she was ultimately admitted.

Fortunately, much of my initial apprehension has vanished thanks largely to the caring, hard-working and most importantly, ever-friendly staffers who care for those in need of services vital to both the quantity and quality of their lives.

Three to five times every week, I've seen first-hand how these dedicated employees deal with about 100 residents in a highly efficient but clearly compassionate manner. I'm certain this scenario is played out on a daily basis in other facilities throughout Oxford County.

This does not require the application of rocket science to understand how additional **government** funding is an integral element in this equation. What it takes is political will on the part of our elected officials -- those in power and in opposition.

Yet, as a former employee with two of the major political parties, I'm not about to suggest this is solely a matter of affiliation or ideology.

That kind of self-serving political gamesmanship has nothing to do with addressing the requirements of our loved ones, family and friends.

All three administrations have enjoyed their time in the sun, at one point bouncing this issue about -- using it one moment as headline-grabbing ammunition against the governing body of the day, only to turn around in the blink-of-the-eye to excuse its own seeming inaction because of fiscal prudence and/or sudden lack of funds.

Nor is this a call for you dear readers to contemplate a sudden career change, one that would include a stint in political public relations and a bird's-eye-view of the issue.

No -- just reflect on the current state of our long-term health care facilities in Oxford County and across Ontario.

Think about family and friends, those who care for individuals close to you and then take a moment for a futuristic voyage, perhaps some astral travel -- at least within your own mind.

Where are you going to be in the next decade or so? What will be your circumstances be and how will they dictate your lifestyle? Who will be there to assist you, if needed?

As for my suggestions to the politicians out there, well as I sign my name, add my phone number and e-mail address to the OLTCA petition, you know my stance.

Accept my profound apologies for the next clique but Mr. **Smitherman** and company -- "the ball is in your court."

Canada Briefs

St. Thomas Times-Journal
Fri 29 Feb 2008
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Byline: BY CP

APOLOGY CALLED FOR

TORONTO -- Critics are calling on Ontario Health Minister George **Smitherman** to apologize for offering to test adult diapers. Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory says he's outraged by **Smitherman's** suggestion he would don adult diapers to see if they are adequate for seniors in nursing homes. Tory stopped short of saying **Smitherman** should resign, but says the health minister should at least apologize for trivializing a serious issue. He says far too many seniors suffer the indignity of sitting in soiled diapers, and **Smitherman** should be doing more than just test incontinence products.

MULRONEY WON'T SHOW

OTTAWA -- Brian Mulroney's lawyer says there's no evidence that would compel the former prime minister to return to the Commons ethics committee for a second round of testimony. Guy Pratte says German-Canadian arms dealer Karlheinz Schreiber's own testimony is contradictory and points to Mulroney's innocence. Mulroney says he took \$225,000 after he stepped down as prime minister; Schreiber says the payments totalled \$300,000 and the deal was struck just before Mulroney left office. Mulroney has said the money was compensation for lobbying international leaders whose countries might buy the vehicles.

PULLING FINANCIAL HELP

TORONTO -- Proposed changes to the Income Tax Act would allow the federal **government** to pull financial help for any film or TV show it finds offensive or not in the public interest. The Globe and Mail reports the amendment to Bill C-10, currently at third reading in the Senate, would allow the Heritage Minister to cancel tax credits for such projects, even if **government** agencies have invested in them.

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Walking a mile in another man's diaper not enough

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Byline: Mike Quattrociocchi
Source: National Post

These "super diapers" can hold four 500 ml bottles of water. The idea is to maximize the "appropriate" amount of time seniors in long-term care facilities can sit in their soiled diapers, as opposed to properly staffing these facilities to ensure adequate and dignified care. I suppose Mr. **Smitherman** fails to realize that he isn't forced to wear diapers 24 hours a day, like many people in long-term care facilities. The bottom line is that diapers shouldn't be used in lieu of caring staff. If a parent was caught continually leaving an infant in soiled diapers, that infant would be taken away from the parent. I guess you shouldn't come to expect much from this Liberal **government**, that allocates more of a per diem for prisoners' meals than it does for meals of seniors in long-term care facilities.

Mike Quattrociocchi, Brantford, Ont.

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The issue is care, not diapers

Metroland - Simcoe Division
Fri 29 Feb 2008
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Column: 6
Dateline: Article

He says he's sorry.

Fine, but we're sorry, too, because an apology just doesn't cut it.

What would get Health Minister George Smitherman off the hot seat for saying he planned to don an adult diaper to understand what seniors in nursing homes experience wearing the garment?

A clear sign that he knows the issue is not the absorbency factor of the garment, but rather concerns that seniors have to wait too long before being helped to the washroom to change, or to avoid soiling themselves in the first place.

The health minister says his heart was in the right place when he said he'd personally test the diaper.

Maybe so, or perhaps he's just trying to put the best spin on a foolish and ill-conceived statement.

What he has succeeded in doing, inadvertently it seems, is shine a light on the heart of the matter: charges that a lack of staff in nursing homes leaves seniors sitting around in sodden undergarments for hours at a time.

If this is indeed the case, it flies in the face of Smitherman's 2003 pledge to fix problems in nursing homes with a "missionary zeal." He said that after seeing photos of an elderly woman in a nursing home, who suffered from a gangrenous bedsore.

Perhaps if Smitherman wore a diaper for hours after soiling himself he might be closer to getting a personal point of view. But again, it's not about that. It's about care and attention, and basic decency.

Imagine telling a senior, who has had a lifetime of independence, that he or she can't go to the washroom, and to just sit around until someone can help. It's not acceptable.

The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors says seniors in nursing homes should be getting at least three hours of personal care; it says the average is now about 2.5 hours a day.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (**CUPE**), which represents workers in nursing homes, says the standard should be 3.5.

What should it be, Minister Smitherman? Your boss, the premier, says he has no idea what it should be, and that it's your job to figure it out.

So rather than saying dumb things, and then turning around and apologizing, get on with the job of coming up with an official standard for daily personal care of seniors in nursing homes.

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Tell your story about seniors care

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The Sudbury Star would like to hear from families and residents of long-term care facilities in Greater Sudbury concerned about resident care.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees says some residents of long-term care homes in Ontario are facing poor living conditions.

Meanwhile, local long-term care facilities are joining the Ontario Long Term Care Association in calling on government to provide an additional \$513 million for extra staff and supplies.

One year ago, **CUPE** pressed Health Minister George Smitherman to establish an average of three-and-a-half hours of care per day per resident.

Currently, residents at Extencicare Falconbridge receive 2.4 hours a day of care.

If you would like to share your story with The Sudbury Star, contact Laura Stradiotto at 674-5271, ext. 211, or e-mail lstradiotto@thesudburystar.com.

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