



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

OPEN LETTER TO MARIT STYLES, LEADER OF THE ONTARIO NDP - OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

NURSING HOMES ARE NOT HOMES!

March 21, 2024

I was appalled to read about the Ford government counting 10,000 new institution “beds” as if they were “homes” in order to boost statistics about building new housing in Ontario.

Housing Critic Jessica Bell agreed with the Conservatives’ misleading use of data (D’Mello & Callan, 2024).

Now we learn that you also “agreed with (Housing Minister) Calandra that a long-term care bed should count as a home” (Callan & D’Mello, 2024).

TVO says that this is “the kind of thinking that might help explain why [the NDP are] in third place between a woman without a seat in the legislature and, well, Ford” (Gurney, 2024).

If the NDP considers institution “beds” to be “homes”, does that mean your party sees more institutions as a legitimate response to homelessness?

Is it really your position that opening 10,000 such “beds” means you agree that the government can meet its targets by building 10,000 fewer houses? How many more “beds” would the NDP exchange for “homes” in future?

Housing advocates - such as those with whom I connect at Toronto’s Church of the Holy Trinity - need to know where the NDP stands.

Even worse, Jessica Bell said: “I do consider a long-term care home bed to be a home, especially if we address the staffing shortage and ensure that there are personal support workers and nurses available to provide that person with care.”

In fact, people are forced into such institutions because they cannot receive the real care they need in their real homes. Some may do their best to adapt to the sharp deprivations of those institutional environments. But most are chronically sad and lonely - hopelessly homeless - missing the comforts they once had, for which they worked all their lives.

If we could access adequate home care, personal supports and other accommodations, I don’t think any of us would want to live in an institution.

Your comments make me very concerned that the NDP is advocating for more staffing in institutions INSTEAD OF real housing and INSTEAD OF adequate funding to expand Home Care. I thought the NDP was making progress - when you forced Ford to backtrack on policies that benefited his friends but which hurt Ontarians. Now it looks like the NDP supports Ford's alliances and deceptions.

Many of those 10,000 new institution "beds" were built to profit Ford's friends - and for generations they will continue to be filled with tens of thousands of people's bodies - perhaps even mine and yours.

It is horribly naive to think that if those corporations are allowed to build institutions, they will staff them adequately. The pandemic showed us how harmful their profit motive can be.

Institutions are not homes. Supporting people in our own homes is economically and personally effective. That's what the NDP should be supporting.

Please learn about and use the research and resources contributed by Seniors for Social Action Ontario to promote better futures for us all - BOTH vulnerable people AND those providing care. See: <https://www.seniorsactionontario.com/>

I am very willing to discuss this further.

Marilyn Dolmage

Marilyn Dolmage is a disability rights activist and a valued member of Seniors for Social Action Ontario. She has, all of her life, worked alongside people with disabilities, their families and communities to end segregation and create new supports and relationships. She also played an instrumental role in working with survivors of the Huronia Regional Centre in successfully bringing their class action lawsuit against the Government of Ontario.

REFERENCES

Callan, I., D'Mello, C. (February 28, 2024). 'Deceptive' or 'awesome'? Ontario's housing goal including LTC beds faces scrutiny. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10321053/ontario-long-term-care-beds-boost-some-city-housing-starts/>

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