



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

BULLETIN FROM THE ADVOCACY TEAM

May 13, 2024

Over the past several months the SSAO Advocacy Team has been busy filing Freedom of Information (FOI) requests demanding public accountability for government decision making and where taxpayer funding is being invested.

Special thanks to Steve, Lorna, and Jo-Anne for their work on this.

Thanks also to those of you who have contributed to help pay for the costs associated with filing these Freedom of Information requests. Anyone wishing to donate to this effort can do so by going to the Seniors for Social Action Ontario web page and clicking on the yellow Donate button in the upper right-hand corner -

<https://www.seniorsactionontario.com/>

This is an SSAO member update on where these FOI requests currently stand.

Freedom of Information Request to the Ministry of Health – Home Care Funding

Request for records showing the entire budget for Home and Community Care Support Services and how the funds were distributed to each of the 14 area offices. Records related to the budget for the Family Managed Home Care Program and number of clients served by that Program. Records related to how the \$1 billion in funding for Home Care announced by the Minister of Health was spent.

Results were sent in a communication to members on March 25, 2024 found here:

https://www.seniorsactionontario.com/files/ugd/50033d_7d9f7a7bb54f4d0aa80b8cccc671f507.pdf

The results of this FOI showed that the Ministry was spending, on average, \$5500.00 or less yearly on those receiving Home Care; that there were significant discrepancies between area offices in funding for individuals receiving Home Care; that very few people were served by the Family Managed Home Care Program, and that the government had no intention of expanding or opening up access to this direct funding program. These records also showed that much of the increase in Home Care funding was directed towards raising staff salaries, not to direct care.

Freedom of Information Request to the Minister of Long-Term Care Re: Southbridge Pickering Expansion

An MZO was issued for Southbridge Pickering – a facility where conditions were so bad during the pandemic that the military had to be called in and over 77 people died. The MZO facilitated Southbridge building a 15 storey expanded facility on the Orchard Villa site, meaning current residents would be living in a construction zone. SSAO asked for internal documents between Southbridge principals and the Minister’s Office concerning plans for an expanded and redeveloped facility at this site, and documents related to the criteria used to approve the license and bed expansions, and internal communications on what role was played by the Ministry of Long-Term Care in seeking an MZO to facilitate this construction.

Results

The original request for this information was made on November 8, 2023.

On February 16, 2024 FOI liaison responded that the timeframe for response had been extended 120 days to June 18, 2024 due to a large volume of records being searched.

Appeal filed with the FOI Commission on February 19, 2024. Awaiting decision.

Freedom of Information Request to the Ministry of Long-Term Care Inspection Branch

On February 20, 2024 an FOI was filed by SSAO requesting a copy of the current license for Southbridge Port Perry Place, and Southbridge Hope Street Terrace in Port Hope, requesting the current licenses and any current documents related to redevelopment and expansion of these facilities.

Results

On April 10, 2024 the FOI liaison responded with a timeframe extension for this request to May 17, 2024.

On April 10, 2024 SSAO filed an appeal of the timeframe extension and is awaiting the FOI Commission decision.

This decision is currently with Commission arbitration.

Freedom of Information Request to the Ministry of Long-Term Care

This request was made concerning the Southbridge facility in Ottawa seeking supporting documentation filed by Southbridge leading to the approval of a 192 bed facility; what was the reason for the decision in light of Southbridge's track record; what process the Ministry used to justify the request for an MZO to facilitate this build; and who was responsible for this decision.

Results

On April 10, 2024 the FOI liaison responded stating that information being requested was severed from records because of "third party information" and "economic and other interests of Ontario".

This decision is currently being appealed to the FOI Commission in the public interest.

Freedom of Information Request to Ministry of Health and Ontario Health

This FOI relates to internal documents concerning proposed or implemented changes to the Family Managed Home Care Program; to the way pre-qualified home care providers are chosen; and is related to proposed accountability measures concerning Home Care Modernization for Ontario Health Teams as developed by Ontario Health.

Results

On March 28, 2024, a fee estimate of \$360.00 was provided to the requester for these records, which has been paid from member donations.

SSAO is currently awaiting these records. Once SSAO obtains the information requested it will report the information to the membership.

These and other advocacy efforts are currently underway including a Brief to the Ontario Cabinet being prepared by SSAO and several partner organizations.

Dr. Patricia Spindel is a member of the Advocacy Committee and Chair of Seniors for Social Action Ontario