



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

PROVINCIAL ADVOCACY BULLETIN

*Please forward this letter to your MPP's and any other groups
with which you are affiliated.*

March 15, 2024

OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER FORD, COPIED TO THE MINISTERS OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE, ONTARIO HEALTH, AND THEIR STAFF

Good morning Premier Ford,

Today the Toronto Star reported that nursing homes are closing in favor of condos. Seniors for Social Action Ontario is cheering this news, not just because we informed your government a couple of years ago that this would happen, but because your government's emphasis on institutionalizing old people rather than helping them to age in place is cruel, archaic, and dehumanizing, especially when you could, and should be funding alternatives to these institutions and stop wasting Ontarian's tax dollars on nursing home corporations and bricks and mortar initiatives that only please developers.

We are asking you, once again, to start funding alternatives to institutions because, as we tried to tell you four years ago, you cannot build yourself out of the coming age tsunami. It is now on your doorstep, and you need to start using policy and program strategies that actually work, and that elders want.

Once again, these alternatives include:

PACE (Program of All Inclusive Care of the Elderly) already operating in Burlington. It brings care to where seniors live instead of forcing them to be uprooted and institutionalized. Your government already invested in a PACE-like development in Kenora. Why is it not funding these instead of nursing homes across the province? <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1002387/ontario-building-new-seniors-housing-complex-in-kenora> The Minister even admitted that this kind of project keeps people out of nursing homes and helps them to age in place.

The Hub and Spoke model operated by Peel Senior Link is also keeping people out of hospitals and nursing homes. Please see:

https://peelseniorlink.com/_content/uploads/2018/08/Board-Orientation-version.pdf Why not fund its expansion across the province, especially where there is heavy pressure on hospital emergency rooms?

The U.S. has **small group homes** for older adults that are especially good for people with dementia rather than Ontario's 30 bed locked wards that no other group with disabilities is subjected to anymore. <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/info-2020/group-homes.html> You are asking for responsive behaviors when you lock people with dementia up in these wards. They will spend 90% of their time trying to get out.

Many elders would not be on a wait list for nursing homes if Ontario also had any of these programs:

Money Follows the Person <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/money-follows-person/index.html> It has gotten tens of thousands of people out of nursing homes in the U.S. which is part of the reason so many are closing down there. Your government should be offering this option to residents and their families in nursing homes that are closing down instead of funding more "beds".

Your government funds a direct funding program - **Family Managed Home Care** - but the criteria are discriminatory for elders and their families and make it impossible for them to access it. That is a human rights violation based on age and type of disability. <https://healthcareathome.ca/home-care/family-managed-home-care/> Your government needs to greatly expand this program and fund it so that people across the province, especially in rural areas can organize their own supports and services.

Newfoundland and Labrador and the North West Territories **pay their family caregivers** to take care of their family members. Ontario has nothing like this and should. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/long-term-care/family-caregiving/> This would especially help people in Indigenous and various cultural communities whose young people often take care of older people in their families.

Intensive in-home and hospital at home programs would keep thousands more out of institutions if Ontario had, as Denmark does, up to 10 hours a day of home care for people. "In the late 1980s, the country — which, like Canada, has an aging population and publicly funded home care — slowed the growth of new nursing homes and instead used that money to heavily invest in home care. People in Denmark can now get anywhere from 20 minutes to 10 hours of home care a day, depending on their needs." <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/marketplace-cheat-sheet-1.6434736> Denmark has not built an institution since 1987. Ontario continues to build outdated institutional beds that this generation of elders refuses to enter. Your

government invested six times the new dollars in outdated institutions than it did in Home Care. That number needs to be reversed.

Mr. Ford, please start doing the right thing by older adults and consider that what you do today will be your legacy, not just for older adults alive now, but for generations to come. Build a 21st Century long term care system and stop investing billions in an 18th Century one. There are many in your government who would embrace that idea, but you need to show the leadership on this and give it a green light.

Dr. Patricia Spindel, Chair, Seniors for Social Action Ontario

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

YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0tGeL4P54rO8DWIVc9TNDA>