

FACT SHEET

Long Term Care? Community Care? Home Care?

Why Should We Care?

It used to be that if you didn't feel well, you went to your doctor. If you were seriously ill, you went to the hospital and you stayed there until you were better. When the Canada Health Act was passed in 1974, Canadians thought their health care costs were covered by our public system. Services provided by doctors and hospitals were accessible to all, regardless of the ability to pay, and if you were in hospital all your medications were provided by the hospital as well.

Things are different now. Key parts of health care have been shifted out of hospitals and into the community - out from under the umbrella of the Canada Health Act into what is called community care. Community care is the care you need at home when you have been released from hospital. It is the daily living support and healthcare you need if you are chronically ill or elderly and want to remain at home. It is the care you need in a municipal home for the aged or in a nursing home. It is the respite you need if you are a caregiver to a family member who is elderly, disabled or chronically ill. Today, the quality of community care has become critically important for many Ontarians. This spring, the provincial government is expected to introduce new legislation covering this care: the new Long Term Care Act.

Community Care -- On the Critical List

Home Care

- The reduction in acute care hospital budgets and the consequent decrease in numbers of acute care hospital beds is one way the shift to community care has happened in Ontario. Patients are sent home quicker and sicker.
- At home, patients get homecare through the Community Care Access Centre in their area. But the Access Centres have strict limits on how many hours of care they may provide. Once at the limit the patient has to go without or pay out of pocket for the care they need. And funding shortfalls have meant that almost all resources go to post-hospital patients rather than to those with long term illness or to the elderly. The remaining need must be covered by family, friends or volunteers whenever possible. But caregivers need a break in order to be good caregivers. And respite for caregivers is too often not available.

Nursing Homes

- Nursing home beds cost the government less than half of what chronic care beds in hospitals cost. So in the interests of cost-cutting one of the shifts to the community has been from chronic care hospital beds to nursing homes and long term care facilities.
- But facilities are not staffed to care for these much sicker patients and regulations that ensured adequate numbers of staff and minimum hours of care have been removed. More and more, if they have access to them, residents rely on families or attendants paid for out-of-pocket to provide care for them. More and more, residents go without.

The new Long Term Care Act will be an omnibus bill that rolls all existing legislation covering facilities and homecare into one new Act. It will affect millions of Ontarians now and in the future. Key decisions will be covered like whether you are able to stay at home, whether enough care is funded, and what protections are available for your safety health and comfort.