

April 4, 2011
For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Ontarians "Still Waiting" for Access to Home Care: New Report

A new report on the state of Ontario's home care system has found more than 10,000 people on wait lists for services. "Still Waiting: An Assessment of Ontario's Home Care System After Two Decades of Restructuring", released by the Ontario Health Coalition today, reveals that major problems reported by Ontario's Auditor Generals since 1998 are still not resolved. As a result, Ontario's home care system is plagued by inadequate services, inequitable access to care and poor oversight.

The report also reveals that 18,500 hospital beds have been closed since 1990 and other hospital services such as outpatient rehabilitation are being cut across Ontario. While patients are being downloaded from hospitals, too often there are inadequate services in the community.

"Access to home care in Ontario is not improving. Huge wait lists, totalling more than 10,000, have persisted for more than a decade," said Natalie Mehra, coalition director. "We found that home care funding is actually shrinking as a percentage of health spending even though hospital beds continue to be cut and closed. Patients face long waits, inequitable and inadequate access to care, and user fees. Access to information and democratic accountability are worse than ever."

"Seniors want to age at home," noted Derek Chadwick from the Canadian Pensioners Concerned. "Often home care is not available unless seniors have the money to pay for it out-of-pocket."

"This report is meant to be a wake up call for all Ontario political parties as we lead into the provincial election," said Derrell Dular, managing director of the Older Canadians Network. "Improving access to home care must be a priority. Provincial Auditors have repeatedly recommended a full review of the competitive bidding system that has siphoned resources and focus away from front line care. We are repeating this call."

Key Findings:

- For more than 12 years, Provincial Auditors have reported that access to home care across Ontario is inequitable with some CCACs receiving up to double the funding that others receive.
- There are no standards for access to care. Huge wait lists have persisted for more than a decade, totalling more than 10,000 people since 1999.
- Home care funding is decreasing as a proportion of health spending -- from 5.5% to less than 4.5% between 1999 and 2010. Funding per home care client has decreased from \$3,846 in 2003 to \$3,003 in 2009.
- Inadequate standards and poor quality control have continued for more than 12 years, according to Provincial Auditors. Inconsistent and inadequate tracking of complaints has not been resolved after 12 years.
- Public accountability and democratic control over home care have decreased.
- Administrative costs are very high. Administration and case management take up 30% of CCAC budgets totalling more than \$500 million. There are four tiers of administration before funding reaches front line care, yet oversight is consistently poor. Competitive bidding has siphoned vast resources away from care.
- Staffing shortages threaten access to care.
- Repeated calls by the Ontario Auditor General for a full review of the competitive bidding system in home care have been ignored.

The full report can be found at <http://www.web.net/~ohc/homecare2011finalreport.pdf>

For more information: 416-441-2502 (OHC office)