

Ontario Health Coalition

MEDIA
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For Immediate Release
May 14, 2004

"Strong First Step" - Health Coalition Reacts to Ontario's Nursing Home Announcement

Toronto - The Ontario Health Coalition applauded Health Minister George Smitherman's announcement regarding conditions in long term care facilities as a strong first step that should be built upon with strict conditions attached to any new funding. The coalition is conducting cross-province consultations on conditions in long term care facilities and will measure the government's recommendations and legislation against the findings from these consultations. A report from the cross-province hearings will be released next month.

"We are pleased with several key items in the announcement but we want to know how the government will ensure that funding goes directly to improving staffing levels and resident care," stated Ethel Meade coalition co chair. "This is a strong first step that will need follow up."

In a brief to members, the coalition has welcomed the release of the report by MPP Monique Smith and the announcement of Health Minister George Smitherman noting the following:

Key Positive Recommendations in Monique Smith's Report:

1. Provincial funding to establish more Family Councils & a directive to facilities to establish a family council that is independent of facility administration
2. Surprise annual inspections with the possibility of more frequent inspections and clear enforcement measures
3. Institution of a Superintendent or an Ombudsperson
4. Improvement of placement for people who may not be appropriately placed in a long term care facility
5. Minimum standard of 2 baths per week & an RN 24 hours per day
6. Future funding be tied to the funding envelope that goes to nursing and personal care
7. Funding of additional nurse practitioners
8. Meal plans to be approved by a dietician
9. Expanded training for staff to deal with increasingly frail and complex care residents
10. Limit on out-of-pocket fee increases to the cost of living annually
11. Review of the ability of homes to hold back 60% of beds for higher pay (more profitable) private and semi-private accommodation
12. Movement of incontinence products back to accommodation envelope (from which profit can be taken) from the nursing & personal care envelope (which is meant to fund staff & care)
13. Revisitation of the funding system and the resident assessment system

Key Shortfalls in Monique Smith's Report:

1. Minimum staffing standards not established
2. Concern that unless stronger conditions are attached the new \$191 million that is supposed to go to improvements of staffing levels to provide better care may be used for other items as was found in the study of the funding announced in 2002
3. Concern that the new \$191 million falls short of what facilities are reporting is required for levels of care needed by residents

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