

Ontario Health Coalition

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Coalition Decries McGuinty's Failure to Fulfill Promise to Improve Care Levels in Nursing Homes

Toronto- Dalton McGuinty's government promised a regulated care standard to guarantee adequate levels of care for residents in nursing homes, but has instead announced a review that will delay, if not permanently derail such standards.

During this spring's hearings into Bill 140 – the Long Term Care Homes Act – the government received briefs from numerous organizations arguing that a staffing and care standard was necessary to end neglect and improve the health of nursing home residents. The government responded by promising to implement a care standard.

The coalition - representing seniors' organizations, residents' advocates and caregivers' and nurses' unions - expressed concern that this consultation process is an eleventh hour delay tactic, announced on the eve of an election call.

"The failure to bring in a regulation to force nursing homes to provide reasonable levels of care for vulnerable seniors is a betrayal of repeated promises made by the McGuinty government as recently as last spring," noted Natalie Mehra, Director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

The coalition is concerned the timing of the review coupled with the absence of a commitment in the Liberal campaign platform opens the door to abandonment of proposed standards.

"We have already had a major round of consultation when the government brought in the new Long Term Care Homes Act," noted Derrell Dular of the Alliance of Seniors. "There is already a mountain of evidence, including international research, the Coroner's inquest into the deaths at Casa Verde and the recommendations in the provincial auditor's report, to set a reasonable standard."

"The McGuinty government has committed millions to long term care industry for bricks and mortar, but has still failed to provide enough actual care to provide a decent life for the residents in those facilities," said Len Harrison, President of the CAW retirees. "It is time that the public interest is put ahead of profit-seeking and industry interests."

"A care standard is the key element to improving care for those living in long term care homes and a key promise to Ontario's seniors. We intend to make sure it is on the public the agenda as we head into the election," concluded Ethel Meade of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations.

The Ontario Health Coalition is asking Dalton McGuinty to make an unequivocal promise to implement an average staffing and care standard of 3.5 hours of care per resident per day during the election campaign. A backgrounder is available at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca .

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