



October 26, 2021

Coalition Responds to Long-Term Care Minister Rod Phillips' Announcement Cutting through the PR: No Commitment to Reinstate Annual Comprehensive Inspections

Toronto – It has been a year-and-a-half since [CBC exposed](#) that the Ford government cancelled the annual surprise inspections of long-term care homes after it took office in 2018 and 17 months since Premier Ford promised to reinstate those comprehensive inspections. Yet today's announcement from the Ford government's Long-Term Care Minister Rod Phillips is again long on PR, but explicitly does not commit to finally reinstating the annual comprehensive inspections.

The Ontario Health Coalition, along with other key public interest advocates with expertise in long-term care, has fought off [repeated attempts](#) by the long-term care industry to end annual surprise inspections of all long-term care homes. Stopping those inspections is something the for-profit industry in particular has lobbied for, for decades, and public interest advocates have had to push back every time they succeed in stopping the inspections.

“The fact that the Minister pointedly did not promise a reinstatement of the in-depth surprise inspections that the Ford government cancelled after it took office is a major failure. It neither conforms to what the Long-Term Care Commission recommended, nor does it serve the public interest. It does, however, suit the interests of the for-profit long-term care industry that has long lobbied against annual comprehensive surprise inspections,” noted Natalie Mehra, executive director.

“On long-term care, words are cheap from the Ford government at this point. We don't need any more announcements about what they say they will do years from now, after the next election when it will be impossible to hold them to account. People in long-term care are suffering now, and they have been for a long time, and this government has done a lot to protect the interests of the for-profit industry but has broken repeated promises to improve care and hold the terrible long-term care operators accountable.”

On the positive side, the Minister is promising 200 new long-term care inspectors with investigative skills. This is good. However, they have to enforce care standards in a meaningful way, which has not happened and is an anathema to the for-profit long-term care industry which has many close ties with the Ford government. The Coalition is waiting to assess what the Minister actually does regarding enforcement when it is revealed.

On the negative side, like all promises in long-term care – the hiring of the inspectors is delayed until after the next provincial election in June, enabling the Ford government to claim it is doing something to improve long-term care without actually doing it. The Minister says the inspectors will be hired by the “fall of 2022”. The reason for skepticism? To date, the Ford government has repeatedly announced tens of thousands of PSWs for long-term care who have not materialized, and a staffing strategy that puts off to 2025 the much-promised increase in staffing to get care levels up to a safe standard. It refuses to fast-track the increase in staffing (and thus care) despite the calls by everyone with a public interest perspective on the sector, including the LTC Commission, to make this a top priority.

The facts:

- Today the Minister said that his plan to create a new type of “proactive” inspection was following the recommendations of the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission. What the Minister did not tell reporters was that the Commission [expressly called for the reinstatement of the annual comprehensive surprise inspections of all LTC homes](#). We have yet to see what the “proactive” inspections look like, and Minister Phillips has

expressly not met with the Ontario Health Coalition to consult on this or the new long-term care act he is proposing. Nor has he done anything except a perfunctory written question and answer with other key expert advocates. The LTC industry, mostly led by the for-profits, has long lobbied against annual surprise and comprehensive inspections.

- On May 25, 2020 almost a year-and-a-half ago, Premier Doug Ford [promised](#) the following:
“We are going to do surprise inspections right across the province, so my message to all long-term care homes is to get your act together,” and:
“We are going to do rigorous inspections and we are going to find out very quickly who are good operators and who are bad actors,” he said. *“We are fully prepared to take over more homes if necessary. We are fully prepared to pull licenses.”*
None of that has actually happened. In fact, the government passed a law last fall shielding the LTC corporations from liability for negligence and has since then awarded a significant number of the bad actors new 30-year licenses and expansions. No one has been fined. None have lost their license.
- There is no need for such a long delay in hiring inspectors. In 2013, under the previous government, in response to our pressure, that of other key public interest advocates and that of OPSEU – the union representing the inspectors – then Health Minister Deb Matthews [announced](#) a doubling of inspectors and a reinstatement of the comprehensive annual surprise inspections to take effect within a few months and be completed (including all the inspections) within the next year. This contrasts to the new promise by Minister Phillips to hire inspectors by a year from now and no promise to reinstate the annual comprehensive inspections, let alone get them done with any urgency.