



For immediate release

Ontario's long-term care bed shortage is failing families with dementia

Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario voice concern

Toronto, ON, June 5, 2013 - According to Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities, a provincial advocacy group, families caring for someone with advanced dementia are reaching the end of their rope, often waiting up to five months for a long-term care bed.

“That’s five months too long,” says, Kathy Pearsall, a board member of Concerned Friends. “This is an intolerable situation and just the tip of the iceberg as we look to the growing numbers of people developing Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. We need to find solutions now.”

Unlike other chronic diseases, advanced dementia requires caregivers to provide 24-hour care. Many caregivers experience burn out and develop other health conditions. For most, hiring external help is prohibitive.

Gale Carey, Chief Executive Officer at the Alzheimer Society of Ontario adds that even when someone is admitted to long-term care, staff are often not equipped to manage the care required for dementia. “A person can wait for a placement an average of 170 days in some regions,” she says. “Once placed, however, there is no guarantee they will receive care from staff who are trained and have the skills to respond to the needs of residents with dementia or cognitive impairment. Not only do we need to reduce wait times, but we also need to make sure there is consistency in the quality and delivery of care across residential settings.”

“While Ontario’s *Action Plan for Health Care* is keeping more seniors at home longer because of home-care funding, the strategy is failing Ontario families dealing with someone in the advanced stages of dementia,” says Pearsall.

Sixty per cent of long-term care residents have dementia and an additional thirty per cent have some form of cognitive impairment. The number of Ontarians with dementia is set to double in the next 20 years. Costs are expected to escalate beyond cancer or heart disease, according to a new study by Dr. Michael Hurd published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Alzheimer’s disease and most dementias remain incurable. Some medications can temporarily manage the symptoms but none can slow, stop or reverse the condition. Changing health-care delivery and service can at least provide better outcomes and improve the quality of life for Ontarians living with these diseases.

Ontarians are invited to contact Concerned Friends or the Alzheimer Society at 1-855-489-0146 if they have concerns with long-term care in their communities.

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Quick facts

- There are 634 long-term care homes in Ontario and 77,783 beds. More than half of the homes (57%) are for-profit.
- Wait lists for long-term care homes are nearly four times longer than they were in 2005. The median wait time for people in crisis is 94 days. Wait times vary greatly across the province.
- Currently, 19,000 Ontarians are on waiting lists for long-term care.
- 60 per cent of long-term care beds are designated as 'preferred accommodation,' which means those willing to pay higher fees get in faster.