



OANHSS

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF NON-PROFIT HOMES AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS

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February 11, 2013

The Toronto Star
One Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1E6

Letter to the Editor:

Re: More than 10,000 Canadians abused annually by fellow nursing home residents (February 9)

This article brings to light, once again, an unacceptable reality that needs swift and concrete action. Long term care homes are being expected to care for residents with serious mental health issues and dementias that often result in aggressive and unpredictable behaviours without adequate resources.

This is, by far, the greatest challenge homes are facing in caring for residents.

We know what the deficiencies in the system are and what is needed to fix them: thorough assessments that properly identify behavioural issues, increased funding for higher staffing ratios that allow for specialized care and attention, wider availability of psychogeriatric support for homes, special units in homes for residents with the potential for aggressive behaviour, and continued funding for staff training. We also need alternative settings to accommodate people with severe problems who cannot be appropriately cared for in long term care.

There has been the start of some promising initiatives such as specialized staffing to support homes in caring for residents with challenging behaviours through the Behavioural Supports Ontario program. As well, OANHSS is part of a multi-stakeholder task force, established in the last year, that is working on actions that all sector players can take to help prevent incidents of abuse.

While homes are ultimately held accountable, they cannot make systemic change on their own. This is a complex problem that deserves a more balanced and in-depth examination than what we saw in your article.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DA. RUBIN". The letters are cursive and connected, with a large initial "D" and "A".

Donna A. Rubin
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors