



OANHSS

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF NON-PROFIT HOMES AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS

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December 17, 2012

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

Letter to the Editor:

Re: Nursing home flaws exposed (December 15)

As highlighted in the Auditor General's 2012 Annual Report and echoed in Thomas Walkom's column, the wait is lengthy for a place in one of Ontario's 640 long term care homes. As the association that represents not-for-profit long term care homes and community service providers, OANHSS has long been urging the government to undertake a comprehensive capacity planning exercise that addresses the full continuum of care, including long term care, homecare, seniors' supportive housing and community support services. This is the only way to ensure that there is informed decision-making about the services and supports that we are going to need to properly care for Ontario's seniors.

We take exception however, to the statement that capacity issues are due in part to operators "gaming the system" by "choosing" to construct more private and semi-private rooms. Since 1999, homes have been constructed based on provincial government design standards, which were specifically intended to move homes away from four-bed wards and "gang washrooms" to create a less institutional and more home-like environment.

Although the sector is aware of the need for more basic beds, capital funding from the province is insufficient and, as a result, homes are often built with the minimum requirement of basic beds, relying heavily on the revenue from semi-private and private beds to help support the cost of the build. More recently, the government has tried to introduce funding strategies to encourage providers to build more basic beds but again, the funding formula was inadequate as an incentive.

As Walkom points out, while most seniors would like to stay in their own homes, it is simply not an option for some. But, as Walkom himself has pointed out in the past, more home care is welcome but not at the expense of those who really need long term care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Humphreys". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' at the beginning.

Debbie Humphreys
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors