

Hon. George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Main Legislative Building
Room 447
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

12/05/04

Honourable Minister,

Re. Comprehensive Strategy to protect seniors in long-term care

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA), I am writing to congratulate your government on its recent pledge to reform long-term care.

The treatment and care of seniors in long-term care facilities has long been an important social issue, and an important health issue. On both, there has been a great deal of concern expressed over the past few years. Reports of abuse, disease outbreaks, poor living conditions and insufficient regulatory interventions have raised many questions about the quality of life of our seniors, who should benefit from professional attention and social interaction provided in such facilities.

Under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act, boarding and lodging homes are specifically mentioned as facilities requiring inspection by our medical officers of health or their agents, for the purpose of preventing, eliminating and decreasing the effects of health hazards therein (R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7, s. 10 (2)).

In 2000, alPHA passed a resolution (attached) calling for mandatory registration of all boarding and lodging homes, including rest and retirement homes with the local boards of health to facilitate this process and ensure that each was properly inspected on a regular basis. Inspections of such facilities are still largely conducted on a complaint basis, and such complaints often involve quality of personal care provided. Since there are no specific standards within health protection and promotion legislation to address such complaints, the resolution further called for the establishment of minimum enforceable standards for personal care.

We are very pleased to see that your government's promise to act on this contains the elements that will improve the quality of life for our seniors who live in long-term care facilities, and eliminate the indignities that many are reported to have suffered. Our members look forward to contributing with a more complete and effective application of expertise in health promotion, food safety, disease control and personal safety. In order to achieve this, we hope you will consider mandating registration of all boarding and lodging homes with local health units as part of this encouraging set of reforms.

Should you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Andrew Papadopoulos, BAsC, MBA
Executive Director

Copy: Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. John Gerretsen, Minister Responsible for Seniors

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