

Discussion: Investing in Not-For-Profit Home Care Services

Nurses know that vibrant communities depend on everyone having the opportunity to live at home whatever their background, wherever they live, whatever their income and whenever required. However, according to the Auditor General's 2010 Annual Report, "in 2009, more than 50,000 hospital patients who could have been discharged endured longer-than-necessary hospital stays due to delays in arranging post-discharge care, and these delays accounted for 16 per cent of the total days all patients stayed in Ontario hospitals."¹ In 2004, total expenditures for home care services were \$1.22 billion to serve about 350,000 clients. Since then, total expenditures have increased by more than 40 per cent while the number of clients that CCACs serve has increased by more than two-thirds.² Not-for-profit home care services in Ontario are increasingly underfunded.

An integrated strategy is required to avoid unnecessary system costs. Increasing access to not-for-profit home care and community services, for example, enables patients in alternative level of care (ALC) beds to leave hospital sooner, availing beds to patients in emergency rooms who are waiting to be admitted to hospital."³

With a competitive bidding model still in place, home care remains at risk of unnecessary costs associated with the bidding process and profits paid to for-profit shareholders; Funds available for client services are further impacted by the model used to determine CCAC's base funding which is based on historical funding patterns and not on current assessments of client and community needs. Consequently, funding is provided inequitably to each CCAC resulting in disparities across the province. This disparity has not only reduced access to required services and thereby diminished the health states of many Ontarians, but has significantly impacted the efficiency of other health care sectors (ie. hospital and long-term care) which depend on home care services being accessible.

Without disclosing any identifying information, we would like to share with you a few illustrations from our practice that demonstrate the need for greater investment in not-for-profit home care and community home care services.

QUESTION: Will your party support the investment of more money in not-for-profit community and home care services that will reduce the number of alternate level of care (ALC) patients in hospital and result in more timely, less expensive and higher quality care?

QUESTION: Will your party support the immediate elimination of the competitive bidding model in favour of publicly-funded, not-for-profit alternatives for allocating funding for home care and health service providers?

REFERENCES

¹ Office of the Auditor General. (December 6, 2010). *2010 Annual Report*. Retrieved December 17, 2010 at http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_2010_en.htm (p. 8).

² Office of the Auditor General. (December 6, 2010). *2010 Annual Report*. Retrieved December 17, 2010 at http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_2010_en.htm (p. 113)

³ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2009, May 19). *News Release: Ontario Transforming Home and Community Care for Seniors*. Retrieved January 18, 2010 from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/media/news_releases/archives/nr_09/may/nr_20090519.html