

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Liberal government abandons its responsibility to seniors

In the last two weeks, I have debated three motions and proposed legislation regarding the state of health care in Ontario. This speaks to the growing concern Ontarians have over the care their loved ones are receiving. More specifically I am hearing many concerns from residents of Dufferin-Caledon about the state of long-term care.

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in Canada and Statistics Canada shows that seniors will make up 23 per cent of the population within the next 15 years. Caring for our seniors through long-term care homes is something the government should take pride in, yet wait times for long-term care in Ontario continue to grow. Currently, there are 30,000 seniors waiting for access to a long-term-care bed and the list is expected to go to 50,000 people in the next six years. In addition, 30,000 of the province's long-term-care beds have not been rebuilt to modern standards.

Many people trying to access a long-term-care bed find themselves on the waiting list. Right here in Dufferin-Caledon, there is growing need for long-term-care beds. According to the Nov. 1 report from Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), the average number of days that a person has to wait in Dufferin-Caledon for a basic long-term-care bed is growing. At Avalon Care Centre in Orangeville, the average wait is 360 days. In Shelburne, the wait is 481 days at the Dufferin Oaks Home and at Shelburne Residence it is 352 days. In Bolton, the waitlist at King Nursing home is 348 days and at Vera M. Davis Community Care Centre it is 662 days. Again, these numbers are just average in our communities. These waitlists are not because the service providers don't want to provide beds to families in need, but because there simply is not the space and funding necessary.

The shortage in long-term care creates two problems. First, it creates a backlog in our hospitals as individuals who should be in a long-term-care facility are forced to stay in a hospital bed until a long-term-care bed becomes available. Second, it puts stress on family members who are trying to find a placement home for their loved one. The Liberal government has abandoned its responsibility to properly fund long-term care, leaving hundreds of seniors without the care they need and deserve.

Last week, my colleague, Jim Wilson, MPP from Simcoe-Grey, introduced a private members bill to urge the government to create more long-term-care beds. This proposed legislation adds onto work of MPP Bill Walker from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound in his private members bill, Bill 110. The Bill would ensure that funding for the essentials of long-term-care facilities, such as food and hydro, would be connected to the cost of living or the Consumer Price Index. If you agree with that long-term-care beds should be funded to ensure that our loved ones receive the care they deserve, you can visit my website www.sylviajonesmpp.ca to sign the petition in support of Bill 110.

