

Media Release

Edmonton, Alberta

Date: December 17th, 2008

Citizen Watch on Continuing Care Calls for More Focus on Safety

The Provincial Government Media Release of December 15, 2008 announced a new continuing care strategy that “will give people the choice to age where they want, with the resources they need to live safely where they choose.” Citizen Watch on Continuing Care, a province-wide network of families and friends with loved ones in a range of continuing care settings, thinks it’s a huge assumption on the part of the Government that simply having a choice of continuing care settings means living safely.

“Not only are real choices and quality limited by high fees and no end of extra charges,” said Carol Wodak, spokesperson for Citizen Watch, “the limited care supports and oversight in many long term care and assisted living facilities as well as public home care programs often means increased risk rather than safety.”

In light of recurring media stories and personal reports from families, friends and residents in continuing care settings about numerous incidents of harm, Citizens Watch conducted a review of safety issues in continuing care settings in the fall of 2008.

The results were startling. Dependent seniors are at an increased risk of harm from predictable and preventable injury in many different care settings, often caused by the “care” that is provided, simply because quality of care and patient safety is not a priority. Findings were documented in a Keeping Seniors Safe in Long Term Care report which was sent to all Alberta MLA offices on November 30, 2008. It is also posted on www.continuingcarewatch.com.

“When the risk of harm from improper safety protocols at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Vegreville became known,” Wodak said, “the Health Quality Council was promptly assigned to do a focused investigation, and steps were quickly taken to address patient safety issues in public hospitals throughout the province. But when it comes to care due to ongoing care needs outside acute care hospitals, the government’s attention continues to be focused on shifting responsibilities for care and costs to families rather than improving the safety, quality and affordability of necessary care and supports.”

Citizen Watch is calling for the government to step up to the plate and put equal emphasis and resources into safety in continuing care settings and services.

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