

Mr. Fred Dunn
Auditor General of Alberta
Office of the Auditor General
8th Floor, 9925 – 109 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2J8

September 5, 2003

Dear Mr. Dunn,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Auditor General on behalf of a group of Albertans who met on July 23, 2003 out of deep concern for the frail, elderly people living in Alberta's long-term care facilities. Much of our discussion focused on the increasing number of people who experience abuse, neglect and poor care while residing in these facilities. Some incidents have been brought to the public's attention through the news media and the efforts of concerned family members. However, we concluded that still more needs to be done if government, and society at large, are to live up to their responsibilities to protect and care for these vulnerable people.

Several of us have spent years researching this complex problem. We have examined it from a provincial, national and international perspective in order to better understand the causes, possible solutions and the role of citizens who want to create pressure for change. One of the problems we commonly face is the lack of clear, concrete or readily available government data. For example, no one in government seems to know what basic services physicians, registered nurses and care-aides are required to provide long-term care patients. Nor do they seem to know if the services residents receive meet their needs. They also don't appear to know which facilities, if any, are in violation of regulatory standards. Even the most basic information, such as the number of long-term care beds in this province, seems to have eluded them.

In order to promote and support improved transparency and accountability in Alberta's long-term care system, the group decided to submit to your Office a request for a value-for-money audit. We believe Albertans have a right to know if public funds are being spent prudently and for the purpose intended. The Ontario Auditor General conducted such an audit in 2002 because of similar concerns in that province.

It is my privilege to present you with the group's request via this letter as well as expanded background information on the subject in the enclosed submission. We hope the fruit of our discussion and deliberations and the supporting documents will help you and your colleagues better understand the flaws in facility-based long-term care that cause, facilitate and perpetuate the day-to-day dangers of life in a long-term care facility. As well, we anticipate your Office will consider this issue important enough that Alberta's long-term care facilities will be selected for a value-for-money audit in the very near future.

On behalf of the working group, I wish to thank Lori Trudgeon for responding to my inquiries and her informative communication and helpful guidance.

We look forward to your response and respectfully request that your Office keep us informed of any decisions regarding the matter in question.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bev McKay".

Bev McKay

Box 969
Cochrane, AB
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On behalf of group members:

Wendy Armstrong, Pat Brownlee, Sandra Copeland, Lucille Gleddie, Jeanette Johnson,
Verna Milligan, Preston Parks, Gillian Steward, Jane Walker, Harvey Voogd, Carol Wodak