

MEDIA RELEASE

Citizens Appeal for an Audit of Alberta's Long Term Care Facilities

Date: October 9, 2003
Location: Cochrane, Alberta

Albertans concerned about the frail and elderly confined to nursing homes and other long-term care facilities have appealed to the province's Auditor General for help.

A written request for an audit of Alberta's long-term care sector was submitted to the Auditor General on September 5th, 2003. It was accompanied by a more detailed brief.

"A province wide audit is urgently needed," says Bev McKay, acting as spokesperson for the 11 concerned citizens who signed the formal request along with McKay. "It would ensure that the money contributed by the Alberta government and families for the care of residents in such settings is being used to provide the best care possible."

Recent media reports of serious problems being swept under the rug in a number of Alberta's long-term care facilities have focused long overdue public attention on the many deficits plaguing this healthcare sector. This alone is not enough to lead to change. "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," says McKay.

"One of the problems we commonly face is the lack of clear, concrete or readily available information or data required to ensure accountability. 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"

"The response of Alberta's Auditor General, Mr. Fred Dunn, is promising," says McKay. He wrote: "Your letter and supporting documents identify many important issues that could be examined by this Office. I believe that it is very important that an appropriate accountability framework exists for long-term care in Alberta. The information that you provided will be of great assistance to us when we plan and prioritize our future audit activities."

Although Ontario's Auditor General recently conducted a value-for money-audit of long-term-care facilities in that province, no such audit has ever been conducted in Alberta.

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For more information or interviews, please contact **Bev McKay at (403) 932-5557.**

Enc. 6 page Background Brief to the Auditor General's Office highlighting concerns.