

# Services for the disabled woefully inadequate



For six years, Delores Presswood (left) of Georgetown has been taken care of eight hours a day by private nurses such as Karen Rice (right) of Mississauga who help her with meals and personal care. Mrs. Presswood suffers from Multiple Sclerosis and is confined to a wheelchair. Now, the insurance that paid for the private nursing has run

out and Mrs. Presswood must rely on government services such as Home Care and the Ontario March of Dimes which can't offer her the type of care she's become accustomed to. She said the home care system in Ontario is inadequate and wants change. (Herald Photo)

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

Delores Presswood of Georgetown has multiple sclerosis. She can't walk, clean her home, go to bed or even go to the bathroom by herself.

For years, she's had private nursing care for eight hours a day, everyday, so she could stay in her own Georgetown home with her husband. The private care was paid for through her husband's company insurance plan.

But now the insurance has run out and Mrs. Presswood can't afford to pay for private in-home care. So she, like many other handicapped persons who want to stay in their own home, is relying on the government's system of home care which she says is inadequate for her needs.

"It seems the government is always talking about keeping people in their own homes and keeping them out of institutions," said Mrs. Presswood. "Why can't they do that for me?"

"People tell me I should go to a home where they can take care of me," she said. "But why should I? This is my home and I've paid taxes all my life to have this home."

So she wrote the Ministry of Community and Social Services which informed her in a letter signed by Assistant Deputy Minister Michael Innis that "while it will not be possible to provide the same hours of nursing care as you have received privately, Home Care and the Ontario March of Dimes will work together to coordinate the most effective use of service

available to meet your needs."

To be eligible for Home Care, patients must meet certain criteria and be referred by a medical doctor, said Moira Reed-Davis, the Supervisor of Rehabilitative Services for Home Care. She said Home Care provides professional services (nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology) and support services (nutritional counselling, homemaking, Meals-on Wheels, etc).

Ms. Reed-Davis said each referral is assessed individually and depending on the client's needs, can receive a maximum of four visits per 24 hours or up to 28 visits per week.

The Ontario March of Dimes organization provides only support services such as bathing, dressing, grooming and transferring patients along with light meal preparation.

According to Shirley Hassell, the Assistant Program Coordinator for the Milton Chapter of the March of Dimes, the maximum amount of service provided per patient is three hours per day or 21 hours a week.

But Mrs. Presswood fears the combined service of Home Care and the Ontario March of Dimes just isn't enough.

She fears not only for herself, but for her 68-year-old husband, Jim, who has back problems. He has been taking care of her at night, moving her from chair to bed and bathroom, which is all he can manage with his aching back. She said he can't possibly do this for her during the day.

If he has to, he could end up in the hospital which means she will also end up in hospital because she can't be left alone in the home.

The problem of lifting her could be alleviated if the Presswoods install a lifting device in their home. These devices, of which there are a number of different models, would enable nurses or her husband to move her with little strain to themselves.

However, the lifting devices range in price from \$3,000-\$5,000 and Mrs. Presswood said as a couple who lives off their pension, they can't afford the system.

John Roe, the Community Planning Coordinator for North Halton with the Halton Community Health and Support Services office, said he agrees changes need to be made in the government's current system of home care.

"We need more in-home services," he said. "It's preferable to have people stay in their own homes rather than go to an institution."

He said the government is trying to change the system with the Redirection of Long-Term Care and Support Services in Ontario plan.

In a public consultation paper on the redirection, the government has issued as a key direction a 'Direct Funding Pilot Project.' The paper states "Many persons with disabilities want to choose the workers who assist them. This would provide more control and less disruption in their lives. The pilot would allow consumers to hire, train and pay workers directly to provide attendant care in the home."

According to this document, the government is trying to help people like Mrs. Presswood.

Until changes are made however, Mrs. Presswood and others like her are going to have to survive with a system they feel doesn't fulfill their needs.



## 50 Years of Bliss

It has been 50 years of marital bliss for John and Jean Brander of R.R.1 Norval. The couple, seen right, on their wedding day, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Huttonville Community Centre, December 8. Over 160 friends and family watched as the two cut the cake. John and Jean were married on December 9, 1941 in John's home at Grahamsville (Photos submitted).



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