

Seniors deserve better care from Liberals

During the years I've been privileged to serve in the Ontario Legislature, I've visited many nursing homes in Wellington County, Waterloo Region, and more recently in Halton Hills.

With each visit, I've been reminded of the joy and wonder of life, of the dedication and caring of the staff in so many of our long term care homes, and of the need

for appropriate standards of care so that our seniors live in dignity.

That's why during last fall's provincial election campaign, I pushed for a significant capital investment to improve long term care. This would ensure that residents aren't forced to live in wards with three and even four beds each, and that they receive the compassionate care they need.

It's also why I was appalled recently to hear the Minister of Health and Long Term Care, George Smitherman, say he would wear an adult diaper as some kind of strange publicity stunt.

Even though he apologized the next day for his insensitive remarks, the message Mr. Smitherman left is unmistakable: the McGuinty Liberal government's promised "revolution" in long-term care has been reduced to an embarrassing sideshow.

Our seniors deserve better. Speaking before the Legislature's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on January 21, the Ontario Long-Term Care Association pointed out the need for an additional investment of \$513 million for more staff and supplies to improve care. The money would be earmarked to make sure residents aren't rushed to meals or left waiting for help to use their bathrooms.

It would allow homes to have more evening and weekend programs, improve meal service, increase the number of incontinence changes, and improve clinical assessments. It would also help with essential housekeeping and laundry-related services.

I was moved by their presentation, and a few days ago I visited Extencicare in Georgetown and Royal Terrace in

Ted Arnott



Palmerston to show my support. I also hope to visit the Bennett Health Care Centre in Georgetown soon.

It's hard to imagine any MPP opposing these measures, but it remains to be seen how Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan, will respond in his 2008 budget, expected before the end of this month.

If you agree that seniors deserve better, you can help by emailing the Minister of Finance at dwight.duncan@ontario.ca and copying me at ted.arnott@pc.ola.org.

I can also be reached at 1-800-265-2366, or on the Internet at www.tedarnottmpp.com.

—Ted Arnott is the MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills



Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott recently accepted postcard petitions from Dr. Andre Spekkens at Georgetown Extencicare. The petitions called for an additional \$513 million for new staff and supplies to benefit long-term care residents.

Submitted photo

'Green' fire station could be in line for provincial grant cash

CYNTHIA GAMBLE
 Staff Writer

The Town is hoping an environmentally-friendly fire station may be a money-winner in the elusive infrastructure grants, handed out by the provincial government.

The Town has submitted the reconstruction of the Maple Ave. fire station as its request for funding under the Province's \$300 million Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative. Only \$1.9 million— approximately 50 per cent— of the price tag was requested.

After strategizing, Town staff agreed that this station met all of the provincial criteria: being construction-ready and providing numerous benefits to the community. The station will be built to the highest LEED environmental standards, including geothermal heating and cooling.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said the Town has struck out in past years when applying for infrastructure grants and "I hope this ... will make up for it."

The Maple Ave. fire station, which will include the Region's new EMS (ambulance) station, will cost \$3.8 million to build, funded primarily from the Major Capital Project Allocation Reserve Fund (\$2.8 million), GTA pooling funds (\$600,000), geothermal heating financing (\$200,000) and development charges (\$200,000).

Final costs for the two new fire stations— the Maple Ave. one and the new headquarters building on Eighth Line— won't be known until tenders are opened in early April.

However, if the Town is successful in winning the provincial grant, then any remaining Town money allocated to the project could be returned to the reserve fund for the next major capital project— the expansion of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre and Library.

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