

Redevelop old homes first, long-term care providers say

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Some long-term care providers are questioning the effectiveness of a bill that claims to improve conditions for their residents.

The Long-Term Care Homes Act focuses on protecting residents from abuse and neglect but fails to address the redevelopment of older facilities, says Mary Nester, the director of communications and policy development for the Central Care Corporation.

The corporation owns and operates 65 long-term care homes in the province, including Iler Lodge Long Term Care Centre and Country Village - The Willows in Woodslee.

Nester said it is a "glaring concern" that the proposed legislation contains no government commitment to a capital renewal program that would help fund the upgrading of older, category B and C homes - facilities that exceed the two-bed per ward room standard used in newer homes.

"We're not seeing a realistic vision for category B and C homes, where residents are still using four beds in a ward," Nester said. "The residents of (these) homes are essentially being left out."

Nester said the bulk of the

legislation basically reinforces measures that are already in place for many homes, such as limiting the use of restraints and the creation of resident and family councils. If passed, the act would also mandate that a registered nurse be available for work in a long-term care home 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Licencing terms would also be defined for homes for up to 25 years.

The proposed legislative change is based on the Commitment to Care Report, which gathered hundreds of suggestions in 2004 from operators of Ontario's long-term care homes, residents and their family members.

Essex MPP Bruce Crozier said the legislation will most likely go before the House of Commons before Christmas.

Judy Wyllie supports Nester's argument. The administrator at Royal Oak Long Term Care Centre in Kingsville said without direct capital support to the province's 350 older B and C homes many residents will suffer. She said if the bill passes, 36,000 residents will continue to be denied the level of care available at newer facilities.

"If the big discussion is about dignity, privacy and care, you can't accomplish

that with some of these older facilities," she said.

On Sept. 29, the province committed to provide \$10.35-per-bed-per-day for 20 years to aid in project financing and construction of new beds in Kingston and Hastings County.

A similar commitment is now required to rebuild B and C homes, Ontario Long-Term Care Association Executive Director Karen Sullivan said in a media release.

"We need the government's commitment to begin the renewal process immediately, otherwise in 10 years we will still be where we are now," She said.

County roads

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Leamington Mayor John Adams said when the eight-to-10-month worker permits come to an end for some of the workers, the town is expecting a new crew in January.

"That's when we really have to crack down on bike safety for the migrant workers," he said.

Since the program began, Adams said he's noticed workers wearing reflective arm bands and using battery operated red lights on their bikes.

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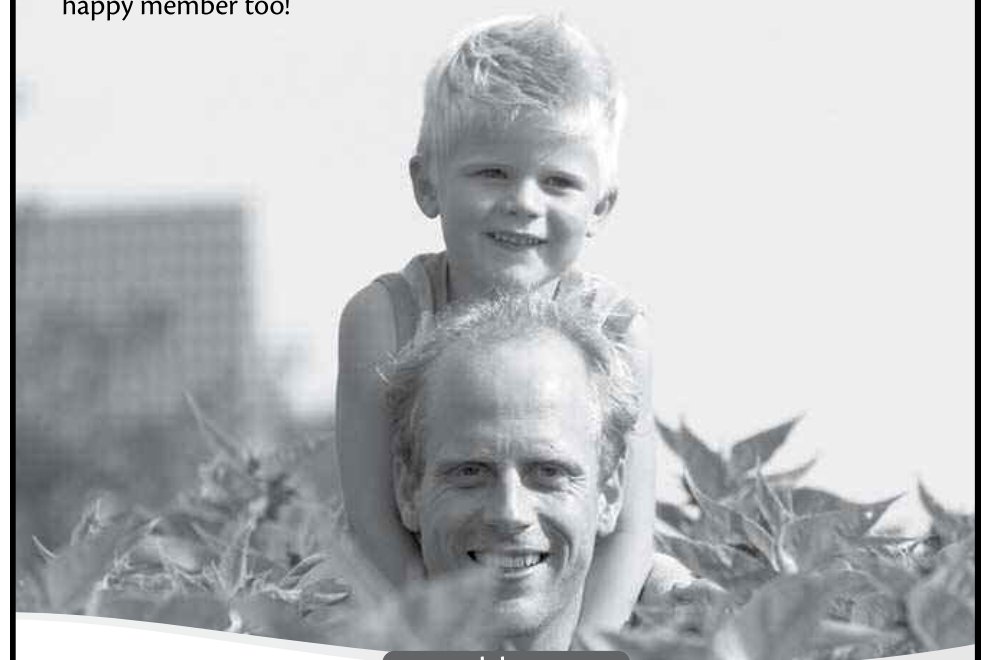
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