

OPINION

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Editorial

Grits should invest in home care

Former provincial health minister Elinor Caplan wants the Ontario government to invest in home care — big time.

She tabled a report Monday calling for \$100 million in spending to revamp the system, which uses a patchwork of agencies to provide medical care to clients in their homes.

The price tag is certainly a bitter pill to swallow and, at the end of the day, will likely be pared significantly if Premier Dalton McGuinty's government acts on her report.

But the thrust behind Ms Caplan's 70 recommendations are sound, particularly those that deal with new standards for contracts.

Our home care system, as it stands, has been plagued by strife surrounding the way contracts are issued and how workers are treated. While, at first glance, you wouldn't think this would have much of an impact on patient care, that wasn't the experience for CHATS clients in York Region.

Late last year, the majority of the agency's workforce was laid off after the Community Care Access Centre didn't renew its home care contract. The move threw clients into turmoil over the fact they lost longtime caregivers with whom they had developed strong bonds.

Key to Ms Caplan's proposal is the establishment of a central body to set and monitor standards for the more than 800 agencies providing care. The agency would determine and measure the quality of care clients receive, as well as create a new procedure for awarding contracts.

It's similar to the provincewide curriculum established by the former Tory government, bringing uniformity to a system that serves some of Ontario's most fragile residents.

The plan is getting the thumbs up here in York.

"On the whole, the report is good," said Bill Innes, executive director of York's Community Care Access Centre.

"The recommendations will improve quality and contain price. It's very positive for both providers and clients."

As our population ages, demand for home care will grow, as will the cost of health care in Ontario.

With hospitals seemingly incapable of keeping pace with demand combined with residents' growing desire to stay in their own homes as long as possible, overhauling the system makes sense.

Taking care of people costs money. If the price tag to reform this essential system is \$100 million, the government should make that investment. There's few things more important than health and well-being.



Letters to the Editor

Beware of baby bunnies nesting in your yard

Who would know that the barely visible tufts of loose fur woven into a grassy bowl-shaped hollow in the middle of your lawn could be a nest full of baby rabbits?

The bunny nest is about the size of a cereal bowl, covered with balled up clumps of torn grass and bits of fur, and if examined closely, can be seen to move up and down as the occupants breathe and wriggle ever so slightly. And strangely enough, it's often found in open yards and fields.

So mysterious were these ways of nesting bunnies that my neighbour inadvertently upset the whole "bunny-caboodle" by merely attempting to keep his yard in order and mowing his lawn.

The nest was under a climbing unit, the movement of which prior to mowing likely resulted in its dismantling. Bunnies, bunnies everywhere! But not a one made its presence known until the kids came out later to play, inadvertently spooking away the mother, who may have been trying to gather her little ones and reassemble the nest.

My neighbour called me to assist with the rescue when she and her daughter found the first shivering bunny. We wrapped it in a blanket and I took it home.

Within 10 minutes, the phone rang again and it appeared that there were more bunnies in need of rescue. The last phone call informed me I had managed to miss another three bunnies.

Two of the seven bunnies froze to death before we found them. Luckily for us and the remaining

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bunnies, the mother did not reject her human-interfered-with babies after we had warmed them up and returned them to their nest we reconstructed. Some quick Internet research by my husband revealed there is a risk of abandonment if the bunnies are handled and they are virtually impossible to surrogate mother when they are in the nesting stage.

Normally, the bunnies will just sit tight in the nest, keeping warm until the mother comes to tend to them a couple of times a day.

The critical between-the-lines rabbit read here is this: if you stumble upon such a nest in the middle of your yard, don't touch the bunnies. Soon, bunnies will be hopping about, to your delight or dismay, but if you mess about with the nest, it could be a sad story all round.

If you're unhappy with the little hoppers once they have permanently vacated the nest, relocate them or contact the SPCA or an animal sanctuary.

If you find a nest, remember to set your mower to the longest cutting length or leave the patch alone if you don't want bunny bits all over your yard.

CINDY BONGARD
 STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Cruisers alert: Garage sale wars back in town

Excuse me, if I cut you off last weekend.

The etiquette required for such a social situation escaped me.

There was more cutting in going on than in lap 498 of a NASCAR race. And more deal brokering than in an episode of The Apprentice.

Welcome to garage sale season in Whitchurch-Stouffville, where the rules of the road are thrown out the window of your sedan.

Gotta love the drive-by shoppers, who cruise your cul-de-sac with no eyes on the road and all eyes on the card tables that fill your driveway. They're only looking for Freddy Fender eight-tracks or that missing floral plate from Aunt Blanche's dining room setting, circa 1946.

One couple took the unusual move of not bothering to close their car doors as they proceeded from sale to sale along Rupert Street Saturday. Already hectic, beat up and abused as an alternate route to light-laden Main Street, Rupert didn't need cars parked on both its sides to create a hazard.

The cruisers are beaten only by the dude trying on a pair of ill-fitting cowboy boots in your garage, who has the nerve to ask: "You got these in 10-and-a-half, extra narrow?"

Let me look around the stock room, pal. Would you take them in white?

Or maybe it's the woman wondering about a warranty on your 25-year-old crock pot, retailing for \$2.

Or perhaps the folks who will be on your doorstep more than an hour before any advertised time for your sale.

Others think they're in a Caribbean market, not accepting the retail price as reality. They're looking for a cut-rate deal on items already discounted.

The big prize winners have to be those taxpaying homeowners who turn their suburban yards into a flea market every other weekend. The added traffic, noise and carnival atmosphere is no doubt welcomed by the neighbours trying to plant their garden to the sounds of Puccini or practise yoga on the patio.

Beauty. Do us all a favour and move to the commercially zoned side of town.

And don't forget to keep those doors closed during the move.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

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