



# Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights

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*Highlights - November 23, 2012*

A Vision for Change: "Aging in Place"

## Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights A Vision for Change: "Aging in Place"

Fifteen years from now, over 25% of the population of New Brunswick will be 65 years of age or older. With an aging population, it is more important than ever to have public services that will allow seniors to maintain their independence as long as possible.

**"Aging in place"** is "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level. It is about where you live for years, in the community of your choice. It is essential for seniors to stay in their home environment as long as possible.

**There are four strategic pillars to begin the process, so that aging in place can be accommodated:**

- Provide for a Public Home Care service
- Home Support Workers ( better working conditions)
- Nursing Care Fees ( Protect assets)
- Ombudsman Jurisdiction - Better Protection for Seniors

In August, 2012 the provincial government announced it would invest an additional \$4.4 million to increase funding to home support agencies to \$16.00 per hour, with the increase, agencies were required to pay workers a minimum hourly rate of \$11.00 effective October 1, 2011.

### **Home Support Workers**

**The vast majority of home support workers do not have:**

- Sick leave
- Employees benefits
- A pension plan
- Working hours are not guaranteed
- Travel allowances for some are only 12 cents per km
- They are not paid for time spent traveling between clients.

There are significant retention and recruitment problems that affect home support workers, resulting in staff turnover. The reason is very simple: New Brunswick is one of the provinces in Canada where Home Support Workers are paid least and do not work enough hours to earn a decent living

Many elderly, who have been treated in hospital, continue to occupy acute-care hospital beds even though they should be cared for, with proper support, in their home and in the community. It would be more economical to provide more services in home as opposed to having seniors using acute hospital beds to the average cost of \$1000 per day. The current nursing home wait is 813 as of October with 541 in acute hospital beds

## Home Care

Without a public funded home care program, under the auspices of the Regional Health Authority the cost to taxpayers and the challenges for the government will continue. Keeping them in the hospital is wasteful because the cost of their care in an acute-care hospital is higher than in the community. This also disrupts urgent acute-care services when there are not enough hospital beds.

Examples of best practices and standard delivery and fully funded programs can be found in the Manitoba model. Established in its present form in 1974, it is the oldest comprehensive, province-wide, universal home care program in Canada.

Another model would be the Federal program for the Veterans which assist veterans to remain in their own homes and communities with an emphasis of independent living. A key element in developing this program is to set national training standards for caregivers and minimum hours of care given to type of individuals.

## Nursing Care Facilities

In New Brunswick, prior to 2006, all liquid assets of both spouses were used to cover the cost of nursing care services. **On October 3, 2006, the Liberal government made the change to exclude assets.** With the removal of assets the nursing home daily fees changed to \$70 per day.

Since then fees have increased by 38% and will increase to \$113 per day effective April, 2014. A resident retains \$108 per month from their income for personal needs; this amount was last increased in 2007. This is a concern for the well-being of their care and personal hygiene. The Coalition is concerned with the present direction that the New Brunswick Government is taking with the on-going increases since the removal of assets.

Special care homes subsidized daily fees increased from \$74 to \$75.50 per day effective April, 2012. The resident retains \$135 per month for personal needs from their income. For these residents this also creates undue difficulties to provide for other essentials they may require.

## Ombudsman Jurisdiction

Premier Alward, during the 2010 election campaign, he and his party pledged, that if elected, the Ombudsmen would be able to monitor nursing and, special care homes and home care services as part of a new seniors' Charter of Rights. He and his party pledge to establish a 1-800-SENIORS, toll-free hotline for people over the age of 65 looking for government information and services.

We are talking about a very vulnerable population, who deserve to have a voice, particularly when they are often unable to voice their own concerns or to defend their own interests. Investigations have been on-going for decades and yet there is still neglect and abuse going on in nursing care facilities. The oversight of the Ombudsman to investigate without reprisals for seniors and long-term care facilities is a critical part of caring for the elderly.

Recommendations:

### **Home Care**

1. Incorporate home support workers under the umbrella of the Regional Health Authorities. A good example is the New Brunswick's Extra-Mural Program, which provides in-home health care to individuals of all ages. The program must be comprehensive, based on non-profit or public delivery and be accessible for all.
2. A key element in developing this program is to set national training standards for caregivers and minimum hours of care given to type of individuals. To set the standards, examples of best practices and standard delivery and fully funded programs can be found in the Manitoba model. Established in its present form in 1974, it is the oldest comprehensive, province-wide, universal home care program in Canada. Another model would be the Federal program for the Veterans which assist veterans to remain in their own homes and communities with an emphasis of independent living.
3. The New Brunswick government must call for the Federal Government in cooperation with the provinces, to implement a National Home Care Program with standards and provisions of core services comparable from province to province. Home support workers and home care go hand in hand with programs that include professional services such as nursing, occupational therapy and social work and personal care services to assist in daily activities.

### **Nursing Care Fees**

4. That the government protect the seizing of assets to not consider the calculation for nursing care. That the daily fees be comparable with other provinces.
5. That the personal allowance be increased to \$288 per month for nursing care facilities. (Nursing Home and Special Care Home)
6. That the government establish a long-Term Care Act that would house all policies affecting seniors.

### **Ombudsman Jurisdiction – Better Protection for Seniors**

7. That the oversight to investigate without reprisals for seniors and long-term care facilities be the responsibility of the office of the Ombudsman with sufficient resources.
8. That an advocate for seniors be established in the office of the Ombudsman as part of the Seniors Charter of Rights with a 1-800- SENIORS toll free line with sufficient resources to provide government information and services.

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