

**February 23, 2013**

**Hon. Deb Matthews  
Minister of Health and Long Term Care  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4**

**Hon. Mario Sergio  
Minister Responsible for Seniors**

**RE LIVING LONGER, LIVING WELL**

Dear Ms. Matthews and Mr. Sergio:

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) was established in 1923 as an affiliate of the National Council of Women of Canada. The aim of the Council is to work for the betterment of conditions pertaining to family, community and society. PCWO is composed of 5 Local Councils, 11 Provincially Organized Societies, 1 Study Group and 2 Individual Members. Each year since 1923 PCWO has sent a brief to the Government of Ontario with some of our concerns and requests. These briefs are available on our website at [www.pcwocanada.org](http://www.pcwocanada.org). PCWO has a long record of advocating for seniors' health care in the community. In 1976, we asked for inspection of nursing homes by Local Boards of Health and in 1988 requested bringing under one Ministry, all paid care-givers and institutions providing home care for seniors. We asked for visiting homemaker services in 1990 and again to reinstate them in 2003.

We support the five principles for a Senior Strategy outlined in the "Living Longer, Living Well" report. Along with our support we have several observations and questions for your consideration.

The report's statement of excessive and overlapping administration for senior services is well founded. The need for

closer integration of the services and their funding is necessary for a seamless and efficient system. It is time to evaluate the administration of home care and to tie it more closely to other aspects of community care, such as primary care by family health teams, long term care homes, assisted housing, etc.

We also agree that Personal Support Workers (PSWs) are an important part of home care. Mandatory registration and improved training will improve their status, give them better working conditions and encourage longer, more satisfying careers in home care. We agree that profit for agencies is an inappropriate goal for home care.

We wonder why the report recommends exploring an income-based system for home care and community-based support services. These are so much more affordable for the health care system that discouraging their use and sending people into institutions would be counter-productive. If home care is to be paid for by the patient more will choose to go without needed services and end up in institutions. The administration of an income-based system will be very complex, requiring many person hours to assess each client's level of payment, and then to collect and keep track of it. In the end, it is doubtful if the plan would save any money for the government. The tax system is income-based and could accomplish the required outcome more simply and effectively.

Living Longer, Living Well also recommends supporting natural (unpaid) caregivers, who would be increasingly burdened if the patient refused to pay for services recommended by the care coordinator. Caregivers add high value to home care and need to be protected from burn-out.

PCWO has historically recommended that education about palliative care must be strengthened, both for health care

providers and for the general public. We are concerned that the medical community and patients/families are opting for expensive medical interventions which only serve to prolong dying, but are essentially futile as patient care. Many living wills ask for palliative care at the end of life. Medical breakthroughs receive a lot of attention, but the gentleness and comfort of appropriate palliative care are seldom mentioned. We trust that the adoption of the Senior Strategy will help to heighten the role of palliative care in Ontario.

Sincerely,  
Mary Potter, President PCWO

cc: Dr. Samir Sinha