



Seniors' Advocate Issues Statement Regarding Recent Rate Increases for Private-Paying Residents in NL Personal Care Homes

On September 28, 2023 the Honourable Tom Osborne, Minister of Health and Community Services, announced increased monthly rates provided for government-subsidized beds in personal care homes (PCH) and community care homes. This change is meant to support operators in accepting more residents with higher care needs, helping with recruitment and retention of PCH workers, and allowing for patients currently in acute care beds to receive care in PCHs.

This rate increase is a welcome move forward, demonstrating the important role of PCHs in providing care for individuals throughout the province. However, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate has been contacted by numerous private-pay residents and family members who have been notified that their rates will also increase. These seniors are very concerned about the significant increase in their rate. Some have received a 30-day notice of the increase and fear not having time to explore alternate options and ultimately eviction if they cannot afford the increased rate. They know the challenge they will face seeking affordable, accessible and safe housing in a market with little to no vacancies and accessing services to meet their care requirements.

Just over 600 seniors who are privately paying to live in a PCH may be impacted by the recent rate increases and a large proportion of these do require some level of care. While the subsidy rates have not increased in over 5 years, the current increase (approximately 13 to 20%) is a significant all-at-once increase for private paying residents on fixed incomes. All private-paying residents require a financial reassessment to determine if they will now qualify for a subsidy given the increased rates. I encourage these residents to immediately request the necessary documents from their PCH Operator to begin the financial reassessment. As well, residents who feel their care needs have changed should discuss the possibility of a clinical reassessment with PCH personnel.

I appreciate that many PCHs are working with their private-pay residents on this issue, however, I ask all PCH Operators to pause rate increases for private-pay residents until all such residents have undergone the reassessment process and/or have had time to explore their options. Specifically, I ask that private-pay residents receive a minimum notice of 90-days before PCHs implement the new rates. This additional time will mitigate unnecessary upset, as some people may qualify to be subsidized. For people who will continue to be private-pay, they will have the time needed to explore the available options and make informed decisions. This approach will also provide the necessary information to determine if any further intervention is required.

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