



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 7, 2020

Oversight of Retirement Homes Must Evolve to Meet Growing Care Needs of Residents: Auditor General

(TORONTO) A shift is occurring whereby more people with extensive health-care needs are now living in some of Ontario's 770 licensed retirement homes, Ontario's Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk states in her *2020 Annual Report* released today. An estimated 58,000 seniors live in these homes, which are intended to be residential spaces in the community and not health-care institutions like long-term-care homes.

The retirement homes audit found that 26% of people requiring long-term-care home placement were waiting in retirement homes as of March 31, 2020, an increase from 23% four years earlier.

"We also found that over 4,000 patients who no longer need acute care in Ontario hospitals were discharged to retirement homes in 2019/20," said Lysyk. "Many of those people had health profiles similar to residents in long-term-care homes."

The Report found the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) does not have data on the health profile of retirement home residents to strengthen its oversight of staffing and care services provided in retirement homes. Meantime, legislation exempts the RHRA from overseeing beds in retirement homes that are governed or funded by local governments or other ministries. For example, the RHRA is exempt from overseeing beds occupied by patients discharged from hospitals subsidized under the Ministry of Health's short-term transitional-care program.

"This regulatory gap means that some medically vulnerable individuals living in retirement homes are not afforded the safety, care and consumer protection that the RHRA is tasked to provide to retirement home residents," Lysyk stated.

The audit also identified concerns about the level of retirement home inspections and the care their residents receive. Between 2017/18 and 2019/20, more than 50% of the concerns raised in written complaints to the RHRA related to resident care. These complaints include residents not being offered suitable meals, not being provided with personal hygiene services such as bathing and grooming, and instances where residents incurred bedsores that became infected. The RHRA responded to written complaints often four-and-a-half months after they were filed.

The Report also found that five operators have been allowed to operate retirement homes without an automated fire sprinkler system; another five have indicated to the RHRA that they had installed these systems but had yet to provide further documents before installation can be considered complete.

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For more information, please contact:

Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General
(647) 267-9263

Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

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Background and Other Findings:

- The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) is a self-funded, not-for-profit administrative authority and is overseen by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (Ministry). The Ministry is responsible for confirming the RHRA is carrying out its duties to protect the public interest and fulfill its mandate.
- The RHRA provides policy advice, grants licences, oversees compliance and enforcement, conducts inspections, responds to public complaints, educates retirement homes, consumers and the public about the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010*, and maintains a public registry of licensed retirement.
- In 2019/20 just over 4,000 people who lived in retirement homes were previously hospital patients who were designated as alternate level of care (ALC). Patients designated as ALC are discharged from a hospital because they no longer require acute care but could be waiting for a long-term-care bed.
- As of March 31, 2020, about 38,000 people were waiting to be placed in long-term-care homes, 26%, or about 10,000, were waiting in licensed retirement homes.
- As of March 31, 2020, there were 770 licensed retirement homes in Ontario with the potential capacity to provide care and accommodation for about 80,000 Ontarians.
- The RHRA does not systematically collect or analyze information about the health profile of retirement home residents. A one-time study in 2019 noted that about 43% of retirement home residents receive government-funded home-care services. We obtained more recent data from Ontario Health and found that the percentage of retirement home residents who receive home-care services grew to 52% by 2019/20.
- The RHRA response to written complaints was slow, often four-and-a-half months after receiving them from the public. It does not have a target time for addressing complaints and does not inform the public what turnaround time can be expected.
- We found 56 retirement homes that were subject to multiple complaints between 2017/18 and 2019/20, but the public was only made aware of 15% of these through publicly disclosed inspection results.
- The RHRA has not developed benchmarks for its performance indicators and the Ministry has been complicit in its oversight—for example, the Ministry told us a timeline has yet to be set for the Authority to adopt full performance measurement—almost a decade after its inception.