



# BILL WALKER

MPP, BRUCE-GREY-OWEN SOUND

Room 410, Queen's Park  
Main Legislative Building  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A8

bill.walker@pc.ola.org  
www.billwalkermpp.com  
P: 416-325-6242 F: 416-325-6248

Hon. Eric Hoskins  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

June 8, 2016

Dear Minister Hoskins:

I am writing to bring to your attention the negative actions that are playing out across Ontario communities engaged in your Ministry's Long-Term Care Home Renewal Strategy. In all scenarios, including my riding, residents and their families are voicing growing frustration over the loss of nursing beds and long-term care jobs in their community.

From Hillside Manor in Stratford, to Brierwood Gardens in Brantford and most recently Grey Gables in Markdale, which is in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, families with loved ones in long-term care are speaking up in growing numbers against the unintended consequences of the Ministry's Redevelopment Plan that appears to be pitting community against community as each fights for better access to beds that are becoming more scarce with our growing aging population. As you're likely aware, in Brantford's case, that community may lose as many as 79 beds; Stratford may see as many as 90 beds disbursed, while Markdale stands to lose 66 beds as those beds are being moved out of that community.

Notwithstanding the need to upgrade aging long-term care homes, the ministry's Renewal Strategy cannot be used as an excuse for taking beds out of communities and wait-listing more frail seniors at a time when the province's wait-list has hit a new record high, with 26,500 seniors across Ontario going without a long-term-care bed, a number that will double to 50,000 by 2021. As you're well aware, places like Peterborough, where there is currently a wait list of over 2,700 people in need of long-term care beds – the longest wait lists in the whole province – have been waiting since 2011 for approval of their licence for new long-term care beds.

Compounding Ontario's bed-shortage problem is that it's putting additional pressures on hospitals at a time when they're overcrowded and stretched to their limit. Nowhere are they stretched to their limit more than in small and rural towns where Ontarians have always faced higher challenges in accessing services close to home. Ontario's Patient Ombudsman recently stated to the media "one of the biggest complaints is the inability to discharge patients into long-term care because there aren't enough spaces...as the population ages, this problem will only become worse unless more long-term care homes come on stream."

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Together, these pressures are leaving residents and politicians understandably anxious. Yet, there are zero commitments from the province to add new long-term care beds to accommodate the growing need.

Last week, seven members of Grey County Council walked out in protest of the plan to close Grey Gables in Markdale, representing the communities of Grey Highlands, Blue Mountains, Southgate, Chatsworth and Meaford.

I know you will agree that if the long-term care sector was adequately funded, then communities would not be forced to fight each other for access to these valued and necessary services. You will also agree with me when I say this situation – from a severe bed shortage that leaves every long-term care home with a waiting list to bed transfers that are forcing communities to fight each other over scarce access to long-term care – is untenable and unacceptable.

It's clear the government needs to deal with this growing crisis by ensuring frail seniors have access to care *when* and *where* they need it. I believe that access to long-term care is going to only get worse unless the government takes action now. I believe our seniors deserve better: they deserve better care, better services and better standards. To this end, I look forward to hearing from you about your plan to address the loss of beds under the Renewal Strategy and the need for more long-term care beds in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Bill Walker, MPP  
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound

Encl.

CC: Grey County Council and Warden  
Grey Highlands Council and Mayor





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## **Grey County Councillors Walk Out During Vote**

By [Kirk Scott](#) June 8, 2017 9:43am

A vote on the fate of Grey Gables in Markdale did not take place as planned at Grey County Council.

Councillors were to vote on a motion to close it as a county run long-term care facility and put it up for sale to the private sector. Grey Gables would be amalgamated with a new facility in Durham.

However, several councillors opposed to the plan walked out, leaving the meeting without a quorum.

Grey Highlands Mayor Paul McQueen says he and the other dissenters have the people of the county in mind.

“We’re here to stand up for the people of Grey County and we’re here for the seniors that are represented all through the county. We’re an age friendly community and we’re standing up for all people of Grey County,” says McQueen.

Deputy Warden Kevin Eccles, who chaired the council meeting, says walking out on the vote lacks courage and a decision must be made on the future of long-term care in Grey County sooner rather than later.

“Walking out and walking away was not very courageous of some of the members of council today, because it’s going to take some courage to step up and make decisions,” says Eccles.

The issue will be back at council at the next meeting in two weeks.

There were two councillors absent from the council meeting for the first vote. If they’re back in two weeks and stay in the meeting, there would be a quorum and the vote could go ahead.



## **Ontario ombudsman's recommendations will need to be acted on in timely manner**

**Opinion Jun 08, 2017 Whitby This Week**

The last place in the world you ever want to see a loved one is in the hospital. Nobody likes being there, but we're ever so grateful we have use of them.

We all would hope a hospital stay would be short, that what ails you would be fixed, that you would be on the mend and on your way with nothing but positive thoughts about your care.

But that's not always the outcome. Some patients leave hospital with less than stellar reviews of the care they received.

That's why the patient ombudsman role was created by the provincial government in December 2015. Christine Elliott earned the job so she would act as a bridge, connecting and working together with patients, caregivers and health-sector organizations to improve care and the patient experience. It would also serve as a conduit to bring the patient voice to the attention of public policy and decision-makers.

To say Elliott is busy would be an understatement. To date, her office has received nearly 1,500 complaints from various geographic locations and across each of the different health sectors. Elliott said her staff strive to respond to each and every complaint with respect, trustworthiness, empathy and fairness.

"By the time people come to our office, they're pretty angry. They're frustrated; they feel as if nobody's been listening to them, that they haven't had an opportunity to tell their true story and they want to connect with someone who can help process their complaint."

One of the biggest complaints Elliott's come across is the inability to discharge patients into long-term care because there aren't enough spaces. As the population ages, this problem will only become worse unless more long-term care homes come on stream.

As part of Elliott's mandate, it's within her purview to investigate a health-sector organization and make recommendations. Elliott's first report to the minister of health and long-term care will be released in September. We hope the provincial government takes Elliott's recommendations seriously and acts upon them.

Elliott was put into this critical role because she's shown herself to be a tireless advocate for people. Given the number of complaints her office has dealt with so far, she's been kept very busy. It will be in the province's best interest that Elliott not remain this busy. The government has a duty to act on her recommendations, whatever they may be, and to fix what's wrong. It will be interesting to hear what Elliott has to say in September, but also how the province responds to what she says.