



Photo caption: Beth Podgurny and her husband answer questions from reporters

Statement by Beth Podgurny on the eviction of her mother, long-term care patient Grace Denyer:

My name is Beth Podgurny and I am here today on behalf of my family to tell you how Alberta's long-term-care system has failed our mother – and is failing many other vulnerable Albertans.

Our mother, who you can see pictured here, is Grace Denyer. She's 80 years old and suffers from dementia. She had a stroke in August, 2011, and has a pacemaker. She is unable to walk and feed herself and has only limited speech ability.

My mother was assessed as needing long-term care in January, 2010. What has happened to her since then has been horrifying.

My mother was admitted to the Youville Home in St. Albert in February 2010. As long as she could somewhat fend for herself, things seemed fine. As her needs for assistance increased, the lack of care became apparent. We believe the lack of basic care contributed to her health issues - untreated rashes, chronic urinary tract infections, and open bleeding wounds in her perineum. In fact, on nearly every occasion from podiatrist appointments to being transported to hospital by ambulance, medical intervention was only given after the family's continued and repeated persistence.

We met with management several times. Management had acknowledged our concerns and agreed with many of our issues. However, there was no evidence of improvement.

In August, 2011, our mother's condition took a sudden turn for the worse. Her decline was so severe that we thought she had suffered a stroke. She also had severe bruising on one arm. For five days the family tried to get the Youville to have her assessed, but no-one would listen.

Finally, after five days, our mother was taken to hospital, where it was discovered that she had, indeed, suffered a stroke and had fractured her elbow. Why it took five days to have my mother taken to the hospital is incomprehensible.

While in hospital, our mother's peri area showed improvement. When she returned to the Youville, her peri area began to get worse again. By December, her peri area had deteriorated to the point that her wounds were open and bleeding, and she needed to go to the hospital for treatment.

We opened a complaint with Protections for Persons in Care.

At this point, the family decided it could no longer send her back to the Youville. We investigated other facilities, but other families that we spoke with had similar experiences as our own. As a result we considered a private, for-profit care home in south Edmonton. We thought this home would be our salvation – the answer to our prayers.

The private care home advertised for long-term care patients including Alzheimer's as an 'alternative to traditional Nursing Homes'. They re-assured us they were capable of caring for our mother. Based on their assurances, we placed our mother into their care, even though the fees would be a constant strain on the family. Shortly after moving her into the home, the wounds in her peri area that my mother suffered with for many months had cleared up and she was settled nicely into her new environment.

We signed a contract at a monthly fee of \$3,495. While this was a significant financial commitment, the family felt it had no option but to make the financial sacrifices needed to ensure our mother got the care she needed.

Within days, the owner of the home began to ask for more money. She was soon demanding \$4,995 per month – an increase of more than 42% - within a few weeks of moving into the home.

We were simply astounded. We had made it clear that we were stretched to meet the payment of \$3,495, but now the private care home wanted more. Our mother's condition had not changed from the time they assured us they could care for her, in fact, it had improved.

When we insisted that the private, for-profit care home honour the contract that we had signed, they responded with an eviction notice, to take effect March 1st - a matter of days.

Alberta Health Services had scheduled our mother to be re-assessed, on March 6th. The reassessment was done and it was determined that our mother still fit in the designation of long-term care. Even though our mother was just assessed, the private for-profit facility, just a few hours later, had her transported by ambulance to a local hospital emergency room. We were not notified.

Our mother became another statistic – another long-term care patient languishing in hospital, filling up an acute-care bed. She was also forced to endure another move, another shock to her fragile system.

What has happened to our mother and families should not happen to anyone. This shows that the profit motive and care are a poor mix.

We found out later that the home was licensed as a group home, not as a long-term care facility. When speaking with the licensing body it appears as if the home is allowed it to accept long-term care residents.

The protection that the provincial government should offer its vulnerable citizens is simply not there.

I do not know how to get across, and you can never comprehend the devastating and long-lasting effect these experiences have had on our families.

Today, my family wants answers from the Conservative government.

Why was it possible for our mother and family to be treated in this appalling fashion?

Why is this facility allowed to advertise for and accept long-term care residents when it is not licensed to do so?

Where is the accountability?

How can they increase the fees in excess of 42% within weeks of entering the home?

How can the facilities be allowed to dump a resident at the emergency room door?

Why is the Conservative government looking to the private sector to meet the needs of its most vulnerable citizens?

When we hear talk that the cap on accommodation fees for care will be lifted to encourage more corporations to get into the marketplace, we fear the worst for Albertans in long-term care.

Our story is not unique. Everyone we speak to, who has experience with long-term care, tells us their own horrible story. Most are just too busy, tired, frustrated or scared to pursue their issues.

The system will not be fixed unless it becomes a priority. If you have a loved one in 'the system' and are concerned about their care, you must speak out. At the very least, let this government and the other party leaders know about your experience and your dissatisfaction with the system and how it operates.

Meanwhile, the owner of the private-car home is in the process of opening another facility.

Thank you.