

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 6, 2013

New report highlights serious problems with elder care in Alberta

Government policies of privatization and offloading have negatively impacted quality of care

EDMONTON – A new report by the Parkland Institute raises serious concerns about elder care in Alberta, and calls into question the government’s policies of privatization, offloading, and cutbacks.

The report, ***From Bad to Worse: Residential elder care in Alberta***, draws on quantitative data from Statistics Canada’s Residential Care Facilities Survey and qualitative data from the reports of Alberta’s Health Facilities Review Committee. It also makes use of conversations with government and industry representatives, labour unions, seniors’ advocates, and front-line workers.

“We set out to explore the consequences of two major shifts in elder care over recent years: the move from long term care to assisted living, and the drastic rise in delivery by for-profit businesses,” says Shannon Stunden Bower, report co-author and research director at Parkland Institute. “We found these shifts are associated with a decline in care availability, accessibility and quality, as well as more difficult working conditions for Albertans employed in the elder care field.”

The report raises several concerns and provides evidence that:

- there is a significant gap between the staffing levels in Alberta facilities and the staffing levels required to ensure dignity and comfort;
- while there are problems in public and not-for-profit elder care facilities (as found in Alberta and other jurisdictions), the situation is far more dire in for-profit facilities. Alberta for-profit facilities fell short of the staffing benchmark associated with reasonable quality elder care by well over 90 minutes of care per resident, per day;
- significant offloading has left many elderly Albertans and their support networks struggling to cope with burdens, both financial and otherwise; burdens that at one time would have been alleviated by the provincial government.

“The evidence reinforces the myriad anecdotal stories in the news of late about problems with elder care,” says report co-author David Campanella. “It is also important to point out that all of these problems come during a period when private long-term care and assisted living facilities are generating rates of return to investors significantly higher than those generated by the US stock market.”

The report concludes by providing a number of policy recommendations that would improve both the accessibility and quality of elder care. Some of these include expanding Canada’s public health care system to include institutional and home-based elder care, improving staffing levels, phasing out private for-profit elder care, and the creation of a provincial elders’ advocate to monitor care and report to the legislature.

“It’s clear that the provincial government’s current policies are negatively affecting the well-being of Albertans,” says Stunden Bower. “What is required is the political will to change directions.”

The Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. The report ***From Bad to Worse*** is available for download on the Parkland website at <http://parklandinstitute.ca>.

- 30 -

For more info, or to arrange interviews:

In Edmonton:

Shannon Stunden Bower, co-author, Research Director, Parkland Institute
(w) 780-492-6112, (c) 780-937-9599, stundenbower@ualberta.ca

In Calgary:

David Campanella, co-author, Public Policy Research Manager, Parkland Institute
(w) 403-270-9669, (c) 587-718-2267, david.campanella@ualberta.ca