



Update

Annual Report on Care Watch's 2019 Activities and Achievements

2019 has been another busy year for Care Watch. In addition to our usual advocacy work on key issues for seniors, we also participated in the lead-up to the October Federal election. Our efforts focused on sparking public discussion and debate on several priority issues for seniors.

At Care Watch, we believe that any development of policies, programming, and services for seniors must take seniors' needs and perspectives into account. Moreover, it is our conviction that seniors are and can continue to be a force for positive change. Alongside you, Care Watch continues to monitor government policy and hold political leaders and government officials accountable for their actions and, in some cases, lack of action.

Federal Election in October 2019

Although health services are, for the most part, provincial and territorial responsibilities, they are guided and supported by national policies and frameworks. Care Watch therefore followed the Federal election closely.

We tracked the positions of the main political parties on issues we view as crucial for seniors, including: (1) home care and community support services; (2) a national seniors strategy; and (3) a national pharmacare programme. We prepared several resources: election briefs with detailed information, as well as monthly e-bulletins, which included specific questions seniors and others could ask candidates and parties seeking their support. We did not suggest how our readers should vote, but how they could ask the questions and get the information to make informed decisions. We shared our information widely and posted it on our website.

Monitoring Ontario Government Policy

Ontario is still Care Watch's main focus. Accordingly, we monitored provincial policy developments, particularly the major restructuring of the provincial health system that was announced in February 2019 and became law in April 2019 with the passing of *The People's Health Care Act*. The latest overhaul of Ontario's health system includes: the integration of multiple agencies and providers, including the 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), into a single agency called Ontario Health; the creation of the Ontario Health Teams; and emphasis on increased use of technology to deliver services.

Thus far, from Care Watch's standpoint, the process to revamp the provincial health system has been lacking in information-sharing and transparency. It is not clear how the health system restructuring will improve services and specifically affect home care and community support services for seniors. Given the major gaps in information, we believe it essential to ask questions and to encourage others to do likewise.

Communications

To support Care Watch's advocacy work, a major activity for 2019 has been communication. This activity reflects our goal of getting the word out on issues of importance to seniors. We have produced a series of e-bulletins. Each is devoted to a unique topic, is short and concise, and contains suggestions on what the reader can do to find out more. In 2019, e-bulletin topics included: basket of services, ageism, Ontario Health Teams, Federal election 2019 (both before and after), national pharmacare, a national seniors strategy, and applying the *Canada Health Act* principles to home and community care. We have distributed these e-bulletins widely to Care Watch members and supporters; various organizations focused on seniors; politicians at the municipal, provincial, and federal government levels; and journalists.

Care Watch has increased its use of social media, including Twitter and our blog. We also reorganized our website and added new content.

Other Activities

- **Annual General Meeting:** On January 16, 2019, Care Watch held its 2018 Annual General Meeting (AGM). Stacy Landau, the CEO of SPRINT Senior Care, gave an informative presentation on “Community Support Sector Challenges in the Current Environment.” Following the presentation, Care Watch held its annual business meeting, acknowledged the excellent contributions of retiring Board members, and welcomed two new Board members.
- **Meeting with Ontario MPPs:** This past year, Board members met with their local MPPs to inform them about Care Watch and what we are advocating for. The meetings were an opportunity for Board members to explain Care Watch’s goal for Ontario to provide a standard basket of services for seniors. A province-wide standard for a basket of services would give all seniors access to an array of services that would support their ability to remain safely at home and in their communities.
- **Providing feedback and input to government policy:** In January 2019, Care Watch made a Pre-Budget Submission to the Ontario Government calling for improved funding for home care and community support services for Ontario’s senior citizens. In December, we sent another submission to the 2020 budget process. In July 2019, Care Watch made a written submission to the Ontario Seniors Strategy consultation process. Care Watch also continues to participate in the Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0 Accountability Table to identify and promote local services for seniors.
- **Participating on the Seniors Liaison Committee:** During 2019, the Care Watch Chair participated in the Seniors Liaison Committee of the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. Through this forum, Care Watch collaborates with like-minded organizations in an attempt to provide constructive feedback regarding government policies, programmes, and services that affect Ontario’s seniors.
- **Serving as a partner organization for a major research project:** Care Watch continues to be a partner in a 7-year research project, “Imagining Age-Friendly ‘Communities within Communities’: International Promising Practices,” which was launched in June 2018 and is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). A team of researchers, led by Dr. Tamara Daly of York University, is examining age-friendly practices in multiple cities in Canada and cities in Norway, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan.

Looking Forward

2020 promises to be an equally busy year for Care Watch. Our goal is constant: To contribute to achieving a system in which seniors can age safely and productively in their homes and communities. We have begun examining our priority activities for the year, while recognizing that we will need to respond to developments we can’t anticipate.

We will continue to refine our communications to reach wide audiences, give them the information and perspectives most useful to them, and listen to what they tell us. We will also continue to hold our government and other leaders (and those who wish to be our leaders) to account. We look forward to working with you on our shared goals and to reporting our progress.

Care Watch confirms 2020 Board members:

At the annual general meeting, the 2020 Board of Directors was confirmed, with four new members. *Continuing members* are Anita Dressler; Josephine Grayson; Michèle Harding; M. A. Masoodi; Kathryn Morgan; Robert Schenk and Gail Thompson. New members are Nazrawit Gebeto; Shamim Hawthorne; Aline Santos and Grace Sun. The members also thanked Rachel Barken, who resigned to undertake a new job at Wilfrid Laurier University, for her many contributions to the Board.

We wish you all a healthy and productive New Year,

Michèle Harding, Chair

December 13, 2019