

Dear Minister Shandro,

I am currently writing in regards to the crisis happening within continuing care facilities. I have chosen this day, Mother's Day, to write to you reflecting on a day that is so special to many Mothers that are in care, but are not able to have a visit from their loved ones, because of the current situation. I also write for those Mothers, that are caregivers, that leave their families to go and be with and take care of, those within care facilities. Mothers Day, a celebration honoring the mother of the family and the influence of mothers in society.

I believe this pandemic has truly shown the dire straights that these private for profit facilities are in and I am requesting that all private for profit and private for non profit, now become publicly run, and publicly delivered care facilities. Senior's care should not be a commodity, it should not be something that companies can profit from. The respect and dignity should be upheld for the very people that helped build this province. Their care should not become an afterthought to profit, it should be front and centre for respect, dignity and care. It should not come with the risks that we have seen, and the unpreparedness that we have witnessed during this pandemic.

Although this pandemic is unprecedented, there is no doubt that the road travelled to it, is very visible. When private owners use publicly funded dollars to better the profit margin rather than the care of our seniors, that is wrong. When the private companies offer the barest essentials by using the least amount of staff as possible, running caregivers short staffed, supplies low, offering lower wages and benefits, that is wrong. When there is not enough staff to meet the care requirements, so those in care who have no voice, go without basic essential needs, that is wrong. And when there is no accountability to this government, or there is no need or want of accountability from this government, that is wrong.

There was absolutely no need for the many of Albertans that were housed in these care facilities to have lost their lives, especially like they did during this pandemic. Again, I recognize that this time is unprecedented, but I also recognize how ill prepared and how little caring or accountability was given prior to, to both the caregivers and the seniors within.

I hope that my letter is one that hold the concerns and is able to be seen as a reflection of the care and concern that I hold for the seniors of our province. There should be uniformity of working conditions to the highest standard, which would eliminate the inequality between facilities. That would eliminate a 'revolving door' in care facilities, where owners try to increase their profit margin by cutting back on caregivers wages and benefits. The delivery model needs to be addressed, the private for profit care models needs to be eliminated and our seniors need to be looked after by proper staff to patient ratios.

I have been witness to voiced concerns of not enough staff to do proper turns at night, to not being able to give water to those that are thirsty, to not being able to hold the hand of someone in their last stages of life, to be with them as they take their final journey..... this is not right. I do not want this for my family and I would not wish it on yours either. Please look at the fractured system that is currently in place, and do something to correct it, for the betterment of all seniors. Do the right thing, put the care back in healthcare, make it public, accountable and safe again. My thoughts and prayers are with not only those that have passed, but those that live every day now, wondering if they are next.

I look forward to your reply and hearing what actions you are taking now, to stop this crisis from getting worse.

Concerned,

Karen Weiers