

## STAFFING LEVELS IN SENIORS CARE FACILITIES – Tuesday April 5, 2016

J. Darcy: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Health about his plans to force seniors in Nanaimo to endure the second major disruption in their care in the last two years, and the minister replied that the quality of care for residents was his number one concern. Well, last month the seniors advocate released a detailed report that indicated that nearly 80 percent — 80 percent — of government-funded seniors facilities in this province do not even meet the government's own staffing guidelines. In fact, the seniors advocate.... The minister said yesterday that she does amazing work, and I agree with that — absolutely. The seniors advocate was surprised to discover how badly this government is shortchanging seniors. Can the Minister of Health tell us why 80 percent of the care homes that this government funds do not meet the staffing guidelines established by this government?

Hon. T. Lake: The seniors advocate — the first seniors advocate in Canada — does some great work, and we appreciate the information that she provides to government, the recommendations that she provides to government. That's why this House has a bill before it to increase the flexibility around assisted living. That was a recommendation of the seniors advocate, one that we are acting upon. So we will continue to have discussions.

But it's important to note that hours of care are a guideline for planning purposes. Seniors are not widgets. They need individual plans of care. We make sure that health authorities look at each individual resident as a person, and we want to assure them and their families that each of those residents as an individual has an individual care plan.

And it's important that we shift resources into home and community. This is what we are doing. We have recognized that in our plan. The members opposite should support us when we do that instead of standing up every time we do that and criticizing those actions.

Madame Speaker: To remind members, the Chair will hear the answer and the question.

J. Darcy: The minister is right that our seniors are not widgets, and the impact of not having proper staffing levels in residential care is human and is profound. We're talking about whether there are enough staff to ensure that our seniors are toileted in time. We're talking about whether there are enough staff to ensure that our seniors get even one bath a week, much less two. These are the seniors who built our province — our loved ones, our parents and our grandparents — and they deserve better from this government.

According to the study that the seniors advocate reported, fully one-third of seniors in care are being given anti-psychotic medication when they don't even have a diagnosis of a psychosis. What do the facility operators say? Well, they take their cues from the government. They say: "We can only do what we're funded to do." In other words, if the government wanted facilities that were properly staffed, they would properly fund them.

My question to the minister is this. If quality of care for our seniors is really a priority, why are you shortchanging 80 percent of our most vulnerable seniors?

Hon. T. Lake: As usual, the answer to every problem from the NDP is: more money. We've heard that time and time again. So, if they would like to listen....

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members will come to order. The members will come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. T. Lake: We know that we have seniors awaiting placement in residential care in what we call alternative level of care beds throughout the province of British Columbia, so we know that we need to shift resources into home and community because we know we can provide higher quality care at a lower cost in community. Every time that we do that, the members opposite get up and say: "You can't do that. You can't do that." Heaven help anyone who shifts funding into home and community to allow seniors to be looked after properly.