

## **Government Silences Public Voice on Home Care**

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The Medical Reform Group today joined the growing condemnation of the Ontario government's Bill 130, legislation that will silence Community Care Access Center (CCAC) advocacy for the frail elderly and disabled.

CCACs co-ordinate home care in Ontario, and contract with for-profit and not-for-profit providers to deliver patient services. Currently, any member of the public can join a CCAC, and participate in the election of the volunteer CCAC board of directors.

CCAC boards have been aggressive critics of government home care cutbacks. In May of this year, the boards banded together to issue a public warning about how government refusal to increase funding to cover the deficits that most CCACs were running would require major cutbacks in service. Bill 130 will abolish the elected community boards and replace them with government-appointedees.

"The Bill represents a direct payback to community boards for giving the government a hard time," said MRG spokesperson Rosana Pellizzari. "The government is acting to muzzle criticism of its policies of neglect by replacing real public representation with their own political hacks."

The dire warnings of the CCAC boards have proved correct. In the last four months, major cutbacks in home care have included reduction in nursing, rehabilitation, and housekeeping services.

"The Tories are hitting on their usual targets," said another MRG spokesperson, Ahmed Bayoumi. "The poor, vulnerable, and voiceless. The trouble for the government was that, in this case, the frail elderly and disabled did have a voice in the CCAC boards. Because this was inconvenient for the Tories, they have acted to silence that voice."

"Bill 130 is profoundly undemocratic," concluded Dr. Pellizzari. "It represents petty retaliation, and political cynicism of the lowest order."

