



**NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR LONG TERM CARE**  
**CBC RADIO TRANSCRIPT**  
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**Matt:** Nursing home operators say that can no longer afford Toronto's real estate. They say they are leaving this city because new provincial rules requiring more space per resident are going to price them out of town. That is a huge disruption and disappointment as you can imagine for elderly people and their families, but there are some people saying that this is a moment of opportunity; a chance to take a new approach to nursing homes.

Bob Morton is the CEO of Advantage Ontario. He represents non-profit, long-term care facilities across the province and he is with me in studio. Good morning.

**Bob Morton:** Good morning, Matt.

**Matt:** Also, with us in studio is Sue Graham-Nutter, CEO of the ReKai Centres, a non-profit operator with 2 long-term care homes in Toronto. They are planning a third in the West Don Lands. Good morning to you.

**Sue Graham-Nutter:** Good morning, Matt.

**Matt:** Your members, Bob, are facing new rules. There are new building codes, there is more cost associated with being in Toronto. What is behind these changes as you understand it?

**Bob Morton:** As we look at the changes that are occurring across the whole health system, we know that the goal is for people to stay at home for as long as possible. And so the significant investments that the government of Ontario has made has had significant success in this area. The result being of course that people who require long-term care are presenting as being older, frailer, sicker, and with higher degrees of cognitive impairment. The changing nature of the residents means that they require more care. Care needs, in order to provide appropriate care for our residents, more space is needed. We're using mechanical lifts, 2 person lifts. The space that's required to deal with the residents has changed because the residents themselves have changed.

**Matt:** So give us a sense of what some of those new spaces would look like.

**Bob Morton:** Well, think about a bed, a single bed in a room, and we require enough space for staff to be able to support the residents, coming from both sides of the bed. Think about lifting that resident out using a mechanical lift, either roof or ceiling mounted or one that's being brought into the room, having enough space to safely and securely transfer that patient from bed to a wheelchair, to help support them using a walker, and then help them move forward with the balance of their daily activities.

**Matt:** I mean the room is almost twice as big perhaps. Is it?

**Bob Morton:** Well, going on to that size and, particularly is we're dealing with someone we would refer to as a bariatric resident, a person who has significant obesity, we're saying just impossible management issues faced us with the current physical size. Having been built to old guidelines, we need to move to new guidelines to ensure we have the right space for the residents we're caring for.

**Matt:** How much more would that cost the operators to build these spaces?

**Bob Morton:** Oh, that's a tough question. The cost is driven by a whole host of things and it's very difficult, and this becomes part of the issue as well. We estimate today's cost, we look at the time it takes for a project to be fully developed, to go through all of the approvals, and then proceed, we're dealing with market forces as well. Now the government of Ontario, as the funder for long-term care redevelopment, doesn't do it in a cash-up-front mode, it funds operators on a per diem basis and spreads the payment over a long period of time. So, we're also dealing with market fluctuations in interest rates for these projects as well. We've seen a number of adjustments along the way, and those are always helpful, but it's always a challenge to make sure that we do all that we want to do in the context of the available funding.

**Matt:** But the cost is important because, do you understand why operators are saying "We can't make the ends meet here anymore; we have to go somewhere else"?

**Bob Morton:** Well, I think that there are lots of other opportunities that we need to look at and this is about being creative as we go forward. We're going to hear later this morning about one of the not-for-profit homes who entered into a very unique partnership with another non-profit organization. I think if we look at homes as what they're really meant to be, a person's home in the community, we need to remain connected to the community, we need to look to other partners as we create campuses of care or continuums of care, where we're bringing more components of our community together to make for a better residence, a better environment, a community that's connected, rather than as we had tended to do in the past in Ontario – build stand-alone long-term care facilities that are silos unto themselves. The way most not-for-profit operators are looking at the provision of long-term care; what are the other services that we can bring onto our site that will complement what we're going, that will make it possible. And so it's those partnerships that become really important.

**Matt:** You're involved in those partnerships right now, Sue. Tell us about the partnership that you have created with a non-profit developer to build your next site.

**Sue Graham-Nutter:** That's right, Matt. We've been involved in looking at rebuilding for quite some time and, of course, with land costs in Toronto, it's become very difficult for people. But Bob's right. If we look at a standalone, it's very difficult, almost impossible, but if you partner, then you can afford the land costs. Of course, we wanted to partner with an organization that had like values and shared the same cultural values as us. We're partnering with Options for Homes, and they are the builder of affordable home ownership condos, so people will be living on the same site as us in a condo and we will be a long-term care home right next to them. There's a very, I brought this diagram to show you, I know your listeners can't see it, but there's a bridge between the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the condo and the long-term care home. So we'll actually be able to, with special staff, will be able to bring PSWs and dietary staff over from the long-term care home into the condos to allow people to age in place which, as Bob said, the government is very keen on with people living in their homes as long as possible. Sometimes they only need a little bit more support to stay at home and not have to move into a long-term care home.

**Matt:** This is something that you note through your own work but it's also something that you know personally. Your mother moved into long-term care recently.

**Sue Graham-Nutter:** That's right. My mum moved into long-term care. She and dad were in a condo together for as long as they could be. And then, as we're seeing in the long-term care home at the Re kai Centres, over 90% of the people that come into long-term care now have dementia or they have impaired mobility, which are very difficult to handle at home. My dad used to say if there had been a PSW that he could've just called, who could've appeared to help mum, then they probably wouldn't ever have left the condo. He just needed a bit more support. That model didn't exist then. And that's the model that we are now building with Options for Homes so people will be able to stay in their homes.

**Matt:** So, when you hear, in the context of all of that, when you hear that these operators are planning to leave Toronto, what goes through your mind?

**Sue Graham-Nutter:** I think what's, everyone is looking at creative solutions now in the public sector. Long-term care has traditionally built alone and I don't think that's possible anymore. We're building with Options for Homes; that's how we could afford the land because we paid fair market value for the land. But if you look at like Ryerson, who's partnered with Loblaws, look at TIFF Lightbox which is actually the model we're looking at from a legal perspective, if you partner with another organization, all of a sudden, the land costs can be handled. In our case, we can also handle the construction costs. We were just chatting about, because we were about to share those construction costs with our partner.

**Matt:** Yup. And ultimately, we want, as you've both been saying, people to live at home as long as possible.

**Sue Graham-Nutter:** That's right. I'm receiving emails from the public right now saying "we want to buy a condo because we want to be able to access the healthcare services that you'll be able to provide to use in our home". So people in the public here in Toronto are very interested in this model.

**Matt:** Bob, in just a word or two, is it easy for other operators to duplicate, to match what Sue is doing?

**Bob Morton:** Well, I think that's the model that we've seen in the not-for-profit sector in Ontario. The not-for-profit providers of long-term care have been very creative, providing all kinds of different housing options, providing community support services, reaching out to the community. When you're driven by a mission of service, it helps you get focused on who you're serving, it connects you to the community, and, in my view, that's the right way to care for our seniors, our vulnerable people.

**Matt:** Really interesting conversation in light of what I think is probably unsettling news that came out yesterday. Thank you both for being here.

**Sue Graham-Nutter:** Thank you so much, Matt.

**Bob Morton:** Our pleasure. Thank you.