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# Seniors rally in Barrie to protest nursing homes costs

## Union, seniors seek action at MPP's office

Posted By **NICKI CRUICKSHANK**

Posted 17 hours ago

Duebert Braham still has his health and his home, and intends to keep it that way.

The 80-year-old Barrie man says he dreads the day he enters a nursing home and basically signs his life savings away for monthly rent.

"I'm a senior and I want better care for people like me when we need a retirement home," he said. "I pray to God I don't have to go to one, because right now, I can't afford to."

Braham was one of 30 local seniors and members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1 that barged into Barrie MPP Aileen Carroll's constituency office yesterday, demanding action on the issue.

Group members, carrying signs reading 'Retirement Homes Regulation Now!' slung around their necks, marched toward Carroll's office door chanting, 'We want Aileen', as loud as possible.

Carroll, minister of culture and minister responsible for seniors, was out of the office Thursday, which only frustrated members.

"Get her on the phone, we want to talk to her now," shouted Tim Cadeau, a SEIU member. "These homes are charging outrageous prices each month, and they're unaffordable for our seniors."

Cadeau said since there are regulations with long-term care facilities, there should be with retirement-style homes under the provincial umbrella, too.

"These places are allowed to charge whatever cost they want, and there should be (legislation) that stipulates how costs are determined."

Rally organizer Tyler Downey left a package with Carroll's staff, stuffed with 500 petitions signed by seniors and families in Simcoe County. But the group left unsatisfied with having no answers.

SEIU members said some retirement homes in and outside the county are charging anywhere from \$1,500 a month to \$5,000 and don't offer adequate staffing to care for all residents.

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"I think seniors like me in these homes are being taken advantage of," said Tony Sergeant, a 69-year-old Barrie resident. "Something must be done about the costs of these places. I'm not there yet, but when my time comes to use one, I want to be able to be taken care of and have affordable rent."

"We've at least started the process in motion, bringing attention and awareness to residents that seniors' homes need to be regulated," Downey said. "We've tried for three weeks to get in touch with Mrs. Carroll and we keep getting the run-around."

But Sarah Petrean, Carroll's press secretary with the Ministry of Culture, said the local MPP is looking into the issue.

"This issue is something she takes very seriously," Petrean said from Toronto. "Regulation is something we are looking at and are trying to get done. But, as you can imagine, regulating a sector that has never been regulated before is a big job."

Petrean said the protesters aren't the only ones concerned with the retirement lodging cost issue.

"There have been a lot of questions about this issue for some time," she said. "We want to ensure we propose regulation in a way that will actually go somewhere. There is a process and it takes time."

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