

Newsletter



Committed to improving the lives of Ontario Residents in Long Term Care

NOW WHAT? How Do We Deal With the Result of the Election?

By Carol Dueck, Chair of the Family Council Network Four (FCN-4) Advocacy Committee

Family Council Network 4 is one of many groups that advocate for seniors in Ontario with focus specifically on residents (and their families) who live in Long Term Care (LTC). Our vision is to work with like-minded groups with the goal to raise our collective voices in support of persons relying on the services of home care, assisted living and seniors' residences.

Now that the provincial election is behind us and we have a Conservative government with a confirmed mandate, what are our next steps? Our advocacy team feels that our energy and time is needed to ensure that pressure remains on this government to not only deliver on its stated promises but to go further and enable life to be worth living in Ontario LTCs. The media clearly and abundantly exposed the harsh conditions that have been in place for decades, only to be aired in public by the extended pandemic. We will continue to find channels for open discussion with the ministry to promote the quality of care and safety in the LTC sector.



Building new homes and upgrading old, non-functional buildings is a must. The waiting list for people wishing a place in LTC home continues to grow. Although we appreciate that the government continues to promise to add a total of 30,000 new beds to the province over the next few years, patience is not a virtue when one's life depends on access to an LTC. With home care limited or not sufficient for the needs of individuals, what are the options while one waits? We are here to advocate for those in LTCs but also those in desperate need of services.

Here are the issues we are focussing on:

- Supporting building new and revamping existing homes with modern and informed designs: We must do a way with the 1970s sterile institutional buildings and truly create "homes." This should include small clusters or pods that mimic a family environment with access to kitchens, comfortable activity areas and gardens, dining rooms that promote interaction and warmth, private rooms and bathrooms to promote

dignity and the safety of infection control. In other words, create homes where the resident and his/her emotional, physical and spiritual needs are put first.

- Embracing families and Essential Care Partners in the circle of care. Their voices and opinions need to inform decision making.
- Protecting visitation rights: never again should loved ones and care partners be denied visitation. Isolation has been devastating and at times deadly for residents. Education and proper personal protective gear can prevent disease spread while maintaining access.
- Staffing - retention, recruitment and remuneration: Chronic understaffing is the greatest need in LTCs and needs immediate attention. Funding is required to properly recruit, train and retain staff. Many existing staff are burnt out after the pandemic and are seeking employment in other sectors. To attract quality staff, they must be compensated with proper wages, full time positions and appropriate benefits. We are calling on the Provincial Government to repeal Bill 124 which has capped nursing and personal support care workers increases at 1%, well below the current rate of inflation. By ensuring at least 70% of staff are full-time, this will promote consistency of care, better implementation of procedures and a sense of connection between staff and residents. The “Time to Care Act,” supported by all political parties, requires a minimum of 4 hours per day per resident; however, funding is not allocated until 2024-2025.
- Pushing out the problem: With staff shortages in hospitals, the Ministry and CCSS (Community Care Support Services) continue to push for LTCs to admit residents to relieve the waiting list and those stuck in hospital; however, this forces homes to work beyond capacity and reduce care. We are advocating for safe spaces and adequate care.
- Advocating for basic services: based on your concerns, we are advocating for environmental control for heat, cooling and air flow; infection control guidelines and equipment; diets that tempt the residents’ palate and cultural tastes without waste; raw food budgets that keep up to the dizzying heights of inflation, funding for occupational, physio and recreational and social workers.

In subsequent newsletters and regional meetings, we will highlight a number of these issues and provide updates for you. For now, we will be communicating with MPPs and the LTC Planning Team by continuing to advocate and offer our help and expertise to make much needed changes to LTC. There can be no more tweaking the system; it needs a “revolution” and we will continue to “fight”. We will remind the Ministry of its promises made for our seniors and hold it accountable.

Dual Dilemma

By Janet Volkes

We currently have two conflicting issues happening in long-term care – a staff shortage and the need to keep the risk of COVID 19 as low as possible. During the peak of the pandemic, the requirement to be fully vaccinated was implemented as a workplace requirement and we have an acute shortage of nurses and personal support workers. Should we rehire the staff who were let go due to not being vaccinated? Some facts to consider: For the residents living in a LTC, this is their home, and they deserve to be protected from additional illnesses. A good question to ask is “Do the LTC residents live in your workplace?” or do “Workers work in their home.” They have borne the brunt of the deaths due to COVID 19 and multiple restrictions

visitors and care. Residents of LTCs usually have two or more chronic health care needs that need to be addressed and that requires staff, trained, competent, caring staff. Some of the staff who were let go due to refusing vaccination were people who had devoted their careers to caring for the elderly or with chronic conditions. People living in LTCs are often seniors whose children may also be seniors or persons with health issues of their own and want to visit their loved one without fear of additional exposure to COVID 19.

Despite high vaccination rates amongst staff, residents and volunteers along with daily COVID testing, there continues to be outbreaks which results in further restrictions, often including isolation for the residents. COVID 19 has mutated a number of times over the course of the past two and a half years and will continue to change over the coming years. Medical experts are currently stating that the vaccine presently available isn't as effective as when it was fighting the earlier variants. The vaccine helps reduce the impact, but not fully the spread of the disease.

The federal government has reversed its policy and are allowing non vaccinated individuals to return to the workplace. We are dealing with chronic staff shortages in LTCs. Residents are not receiving the required care, medical errors are being made, baths are missed, wrong meals are given to residents often leading to incidents of choking, residents are left for hours in soiled and wet depends, isolated in their rooms because there is no one to push their wheelchair to an activity or dining room. So where do we go from here? Please let us know your thoughts by contacting us through our website or are email address. We'll update this information in our fall newsletter.

**TO LOVE SOMEONE LONG-TERM IS TO
ATTEND A THOUSAND FUNERALS OF THE
PEOPLE THEY USED TO BE.**

The people they're too exhausted to be any longer. The people they don't recognise inside themselves anymore. The people they grew out of, the people they never ended up growing into. We so badly want the people we love to get their spark back when it burns out; to become speedily found when they are lost.

But it is not our job to hold anyone accountable to the people they used to be. It is our job to travel with them between each version and to honour what emerges along the way. Sometimes it will be an even more luminescent flame. Sometimes it will be a flicker that disappears and temporarily floods the room with a perfect and necessary darkness.

HEIDI PRIEBE

At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

Albert Schweitzer



Next Family Council Network Four Regional Meeting!!!

The next meeting has not been set as yet .

Visit our website for upcoming details and how to attend the session.

<https://www.network4longtermcareadvocacy.com/>

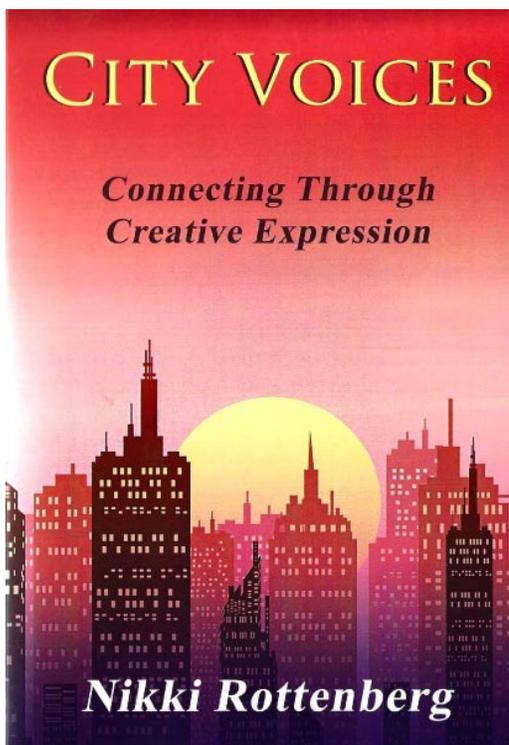
Books For Sale

We have access to several books written by local writers that deal with issues related to long term care, aging and seniors issues; caregiver topics; and healthy living. Check our website for details on the following:

A Slice of Life (\$15); ***Voices of the City*** (\$12); ***Older Caregivers*** (\$12); ***Staying Healthy*** (\$10). Proceeds from the sale of these books are used to support the work of the FCN-4 Advocacy Committee. To purchase any of these books, e-mail: Tom Carrothers at carphaltonchapter@gmail.com.

NEW BOOK IN OUR BOOK SERIES AVAILABLE

By Tom Carrothers



With the support of the Halton Chapter of CARP and government grants a series of books have been produced whose sales help fund your Advocacy Committees initiatives. The latest in the series is called *CITY VOICES Connecting Through Creative Expression*. It is a compilation of short non-fiction stories, fiction stories, artistic work (photographs and paintings) and poetry. All the contributing artists are seniors from Halton Region and Hamilton.

The works were compiled and edited by Nikki Rottenberg who also did the same for the first four books. As she says in her introduction: *City Voices* is an anthology of stories, poetry, art and photography which shows that in tough times we all lived through, there were some positive aspects during the pandemic.

Copies of the book are available for \$15.00 plus postage. If possible, we can try to meet up and avoid the mailing cost. Additional copies would be \$12.00 each plus postage. Additional copies can either be multiple copies of the same book or a combination of the various books. For more information contact Tom Carrothers by email at tomcarrothers4@gmail.com.

FCN-4 Advocacy Committee Website

<https://www.network4longtermcareadvocacy.com/>

Have you been on our website lately? If not you are missing out on lots of new postings related to what is happening in LTC. On the **Home** page read the latest on visiting restrictions in LTC homes; the development of a *National Long-Term Care Services Strategy* and how you can have your say; the new *Green House Model for LTC* and how it will improve the quality of life for residents. And, click on the **New Articles** tab to keep up-to-date with the latest news items and issues related to LTC.

Also, keep up with the latest by following us on our Facebook Page: [Family Council Network 4](#)

Newsletter Committee : Editor: Carly Volkes Design: Peter Gnish Proofing: Members of FCN-4 Committee
Contact: Carol Dueck Chair FCN-4 Advocacy Committee at AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com