



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

Family Councils: Raise the Alarm on Long Term Care Staffing!

By Carol Dueck, Chair FCN4 Advocacy Committee

In our fall FCN4 Advocacy newsletter we devoted space to the continuing concerns of recruitment and retention of staff in LTC. Although not as dire as during the pandemic years, at the November 2023 FCN4 Regional Meeting round table discussion participants shared they are still seeing gaps in care related to staff availability. Night shifts and weekends are common critical unanswered shifts. Our consultations with other Family Council Networks show that this a serious issue with attention needed now, particularly on retention.

LTC has struggled for decades with insufficient funding needed to ensure that residents receive the care they need, they deserve. The demand for “4 hours of care” has been front and centre for the FCN4 Advocacy team since at least 2012. Finally, the Provincial Ministry of LTC agreed to fund a minimum standard of 4 hours of care per person by the last quarter of the budget year 2024-2025. In the interim, they offered paid tuition and increased course availability in Ontario colleges to build up qualified staff. Data is not yet available to demonstrate the effectiveness of those dollars for education have translated to recruitment and retention across the province. Presently, most homes are expected to deliver 3.25 hours of care.

This is not an issue only for LTC. Organizations that help families find residential or retirement homes are also challenged to find adequate placement and staffing. This has translated into growing waiting lists in the GTA and other large urban centres, something that has not been an issue for 20 years. To compound the problem, monthly costs that residents and families face can be a stretch for many budgets, especially if they need to rely on private home care, retirement home or assisted living settings.

Expert Panel On Recruitment

In December, Dr. Leigh Chapman, Chief Nursing Officer, from Health Canada participated with Tim Guest, CEO, Canadian Nurses Association, and Carly Weeks, Health Reporter, the Globe and Mail participated in a panel discussion on nursing staffing challenges. The topic was intriguing and timely: “You can’t recruit your way out of a crisis!”

The focus was on strategies for retention and to address today’s health workforce challenges in the context of a global nursing shortage. Key suggestions included improving work life balance by eliminating mandatory overtime, willingness to shakeup scheduling to give nurses more control and flexibility and letting go of outdated rules and practices. Further, they emphasized the need to promote the perspectives of frontline staff and nurses in policy development and refinement. With today’s complex challenges, including financial pressures, panelists urged the understanding for individuals that join private agencies who may offer higher hourly rates, control of scheduling, and who promote functioning at full scope of practice. Panelists also shared unique ideas such as Manitoba who created a province wide agency, centres that offer free parking, dedicated rest places, zero tolerance policy on bullying, abuse & racism, and support for mental health care for nurses and front-line staff.

The College of Nurses of Ontario is also searching for solutions and recently held a province-wide, and first-ever “Workforce Survey”. The plan is to use the results to inform CNO’s work and help to identify and address the issues and challenges nurses face while working in Ontario’s health system.

Media Coverage Highlighting LTC Workplace Challenges

In the first week of January 2024 there was significant media coverage on the staffing issues in LTC (<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2024/01/03/ontario-hospital-workers-poll-cupe-ford-government>). City News in Hamilton reported on Jan 3, 2024, that “41 per cent of Ontario’s hospital staff say they ‘dread going into work,’ with 43 per cent saying they are considering a new career path.” The article adds that the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), who represent thousands of Ontario health care workers, are disappointed that the Ford government has not done more to address the staffing crisis before it gets worse. The survey also found 79 per cent of workers do not have any confidence that the provincial government will improve the health care system in the coming year.

The same day, the Trillium published an article sounding the alarm that “hallway medicine” was getting worse in Ontario Hospitals (https://www.thetrillium.ca/news/health/hallway-health-care-ontario-health-metrics-put-numbers-to-strained-system-6986200?utm_source=TheTrillium.ca&utm_campaign=f451966928). We know that capacity problems in acute care, home, emergency centres and hospitals trickle down to impacts in LTC. For example, people wait at home longer to be admitted to a LTC as hospitals push their patients out to try and ease the burden in the hospital system.

On January 3, 2024, Ontario Health Minister Jones faced questions and demands from stakeholders that the province put more money into 2024 budgets to face the ongoing staffing crisis in all sectors of health care. Furthermore, there are growing demands from many interest groups to prevent the escalation of rates that “for profit” staffing agencies are charging.

On the last day of January 2024, Ontario LTC Minister Cho announced that more funds for education will be added. The government says, “the program has already helped 500 long-term care homes provide more than 17,000 placements since 2021, and with new funding of \$94.5 million over three years, it aims to support 31,000 more placements by 2027.”

Current Efforts Are Not Enough

FCN4 re-iterates that adding education opportunities, paying for tuition for personal support workers (PSWs) and nurses and the very slow climb to reach funding for 4 hours of care is appreciated, but it’s just not cutting it. The work and workloads need to improve and change rapidly to meet the needs of residents and the staff who care for them. The talent drain will only increase if the toxic work environment is not addressed. Is there time to put actions into place to stop potential staff from heading to other careers?

While initiatives tackling the staffing crisis on many fronts, the results will take time to make meaningful changes. LTC needs funding, policy reform and innovative strategies now that promote:

- 4 hours of direct care funded (and that is barely enough to meet the demanding needs of a LTC resident these days). The European standard is 6 hours of care - we have a long way to go.
- Additional education and training funds (permanently, part of base line funding) that includes all the ongoing standards of care (Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and managing dementia to name two)
- Strong leaders willing to introduce strategies to change the system, focusing on retention and allowing all disciplines to work at their full scope of practice.
- Adaption and training for the newer care models that focus on “person- centred care” (also called emotion based care)
- LTC Inspections processes that promote, encourage, and enforce quality of care and follow-up on outcomes. Inspections should be about change, not penalties.
- Building standards that are current and updated to create small, home – like environments and stop replicating the old institutional 32-bed configuration.
- A Living Wage for all disciplines in LTC with job security in full time and part-time roles.
- Human Relation Standards and support staff to use current technology for recruitment, orientation, and scheduling/staffing programs to promote work life balance.
- Creativity to support working family members with access to affordable housing, transportation, and child-care.

How do we make this happen? Do we wait to vote out the current government and ministers and try to educate new MPPs of the needs as they scramble to form the new legislature? Liberals recently released a platform to end privatization of health care. Do we talk to current MPPs and LTC workgroups to offer suggestions and work with them to speed up the funding that is known to improve the care? Do we make noise and rally? Do we join forces with other networks of Family Councils? Is this a topic on your Family Council agenda? Are there ideas being floated that you could share with us?

Families have a voice in the fixing Long Term Care – let's find ways to do it effectively. We can't be silent and wait. Share your thoughts: e-mail Carol at AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com.

Next **Family Council Network 4 Regional Meeting!!!**

Date: April 3, 2024 Time: 9-11:30 a.m. This is a ZOOM Meeting

Guest Speaker: Sandra Andreychuk BScN, MHSc, MSc
Advance Health Care Consultant; Health Care Ethicist; Registered Nurse
Check our website for the details and how to attend the session.

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

Exciting News!

We are excited to learn that Family Council Network 4, through our website, is now listed on **FindHealthClinics**, a leading online directory for medical, health, and wellness services. Here is what they said, "We are thrilled to inform you that your distinguished health & wellness website service has been successfully added to **FindHealthClinics** – a trusted online directory for institutions, clinics, practitioners and businesses in the healthcare and wellness sectors. Congratulations on being part of our esteemed community!"

FindHealthClinics serves as a powerful platform to connect individuals seeking medical, health, and well-ness services with reputable professionals and institutions. Whether specialized in advanced medical treatments, holistic therapies, wellness services, or any other aspect of healthcare, this website empowers potential clients to discover and connect with key institutions and organizations.

Why not check it out?!

Wanted!

One person to serve on the FCN4 Advocacy Committee!

* Do you care about Long Term Care? * Are you willing to devote a small amount of time to have your voice heard? * If so, contact Carol Dueck, Chair of FCN4 Advocacy Committee to learn more!

AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com

FCN-4 Advocacy Committee Website

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

Have you seen the new postings?. Read the latest breaking information on LTC issues and progress made towards a Universal Health Care. Find **New Articles** to keep up-to-date with the latest news items and issues related to LTC including videos from **Concerned Friends** on important issues. You can also keep up with the latest by following us on our Facebook Page: [Family Council Network 4](#)

Book Review on “Neglected No More”

An essential read for those involvd with elder care!

By Tom Carrothers

“Neglected No More” by André Picard is a groundbreaking exploration of the state of elder care in Canada. **Published in 2021, it is a national bestseller and pivotal to our understanding of elder care and the need for healthcare reform in this country.** Picard, a renowned health journalist, sheds light on the challenges faced by elderly individuals and their caregivers, while also offering insightful commentary on the systemic issues within the healthcare system. Through meticulous research and poignant storytelling, Picard presents a compelling argument for reform and advocacy in elder care.

The book begins by painting a vivid picture of the current state of elder care in Canada, highlighting the neglect and mistreatment experienced by many elderly individuals. Picard draws on his extensive experience as a journalist to provide real-life examples and case studies that illustrate the systemic failures within the healthcare system.

Dignity and respect: one of the key themes explored in “Neglected No More” is the importance of dignity and respect in elder care. Picard argues that all too often, elderly individuals are treated as burdens rather than valuable members of society deserving of care and compassion. He emphasizes the need for a cultural shift in attitudes towards aging and encourages readers to challenge ageism in all its forms.

The challenges of caregiving: Another significant aspect of the book is its examination of the challenges faced by caregivers, who are often overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. Picard highlights the emotional and financial toll of caregiving, and calls for greater support and recognition for those who take on this vital role.

Need for strong policies: Picard also delves into the policy implications of elder care, advocating for comprehensive reforms to improve access to services, enhance quality of care, and promote aging in place. He critiques the fragmentation of services and the lack of coordination between different levels of government, calling for a more integrated approach to elder care that prioritizes the needs of seniors and their families.

Ultimately, “Neglected No More” serves as a powerful call to action for readers to demand change and advocate for a more just and compassionate approach to elder care in Canada. Picard’s compelling narrative and insightful analysis make this book essential reading for anyone interested in the future of healthcare and the rights of elderly individuals.

“Neglect No More” is available at most books and online stores and discount book stores.

Books For Sale: We have access to several books written by local writers dealing 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); ***City Voices Connecting Through Creative Expression*** (\$15). 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.

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