

April, 2021

Family Council  
Network 4  
Advocacy  
Committee

# Newsletter



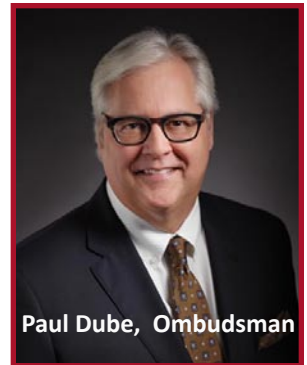
*Committed to improving the lives of Ontario Residents in Long Term Care*

## The Ombudsman of Ontario Wants Your Input!

By Carol Dueck - Chair Advocacy FCN4

In our continuing effort to improve the sad conditions of residents in LTC homes the FCN4 Advocacy Committee continues to send our recommendations to the Minister of Long Term Care, the LTC Commission and MPPs in our catchment area. We have copied these emails to a number of influential movers and shakers who share our concerns. This includes the Ombudsman of Ontario.

In reply to our emails, the office of the Ombudsman of Ontario noted they are currently focusing on systemic issues that persist in LTC which COVID-19 exacerbated. The Complaint Officers are keenly interested in hearing about specific issues that families are encountering: lack of sufficient PPE, difficulties facing essential care partners, effects of loneliness, lack of staffing, etc. Similar to concerns raised at our last regional meeting on February 24th, the Ombudsman's office has heard how the administrators in numerous homes have inconsistently applied the various directives from the Ministry of Long Term Care and the confusion in messaging that this has caused.



Paul Dube, Ombudsman

### From the Ombudsman of Ontario' website:

*"The Ombudsman's Office oversees and investigates more than 1,000 provincial government and broader public sector bodies, such as provincial ministries, Crown corporations, tribunals, agencies, boards and commissions, and municipalities, universities, and school boards. The Ombudsman CANNOT investigate hospitals and long-term care homes; those are overseen by the Patient Ombudsman. (The Ontario Ombudsman oversees the Patient Ombudsman, who is employed by Health Quality Ontario.)"*

The Ombudsman values your feedback and invites your input.

If you or families in your home have concerns that have not been addressed satisfactorily, please reach out to:

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario | Bureau de l'Ombudsman de l'Ontario

Phone: 1-800-263-1830 - Complaints Line and Check out their web page : [www.ombudsman.on.ca](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca)

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## Long Term Care System Inequities

By Carol Dueck

The pandemic has taken a toll on our healthcare and long term care systems for over a year and the fatigue is evident. We are all aware that the short comings in the LTC system have lingered untended for decades. Hence, these broken systems are easy pickings for the deadly COVID-19 virus. Many care homes were stretched dealing with new infection control procedures to protect staff and residents. They struggled to find staff to fill vacancies for those unable to work after having tested positive for the virus.

The LTC Commission's report is due in April 2021. Recommendations were already tabled in the interim report released in the fall of 2020. Many of the fixes for this complex system rest on staffing issues. But, the government in Ontario appears to be addressing these issues in pieces. Although **Four Hours of Care** has been accepted as the care standard, it will not be fully implemented until 2024-25; a disappointment as it is needed now.

As of March 15th, vaccinations are expected to be largely complete for LTC homes, but staff and essential care partners cannot yet relax or entertain what the new normal will look like. The delay in increased staffing appears to be presenting new challenges.

- Charitable homes are starting to lose PSW staff to municipal homes which pay more due to revenues from the tax base. Also, municipal homes and for-profit homes are not subject to the wage restraint legislation of 1%. This puts non-profit/charitable homes at a substantial disadvantage.
- Home Care is searching for PSWs. This adds to the competition in the diminishing PSW pool. Home Care is an essential component in keeping people in their home settings and out of LTC homes.
- Funding for training of PSWs was recently announced, but students of this modified curriculum will not be ready for work for months. Also, if the work environment is not improved people will not take advantage of this training even if it is free.
- RPN's are starting to drift to hospitals because of the wage differential.
- Retaining and recruiting talented administrative staff is the latest challenge. The pandemic has taken a toll on management leaders in LTC with an exodus of Nursing Directors of Care and other senior managers. Wage restraints, plus the yielding of vacation time so that staff is available 24/7 during outbreaks tempt early retirements.

Is your home facing some of these issues? Does your family council have ideas to share that will help administration cope with these new challenges? We suggest that the time is now to craft another email or letter to your MPP, the Minister of LTC and the LTC Commission to demand realistic sustainable staff funding to begin now. See our Home page on our Website to access a **SAMPLE LETTER** to write to YOUR MPP - help yourself...

### Related Reading Material

Check out the link below to two new books, recently released, that deal with how to correct a broken Long Term Care system in Canada.

[https://www.everythingzoomer.com/health/2021/03/02/books-pandemic-long-term-care-homes-canada/?utm\\_source=mautic&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=zoomerweekend&utm\\_content=editorial](https://www.everythingzoomer.com/health/2021/03/02/books-pandemic-long-term-care-homes-canada/?utm_source=mautic&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=zoomerweekend&utm_content=editorial)

### Tips for Visiting Residents with Dementia

Submitted by Nodia Powell Bryan and Carol Dueck

from GentleCare

Families and Essential Care Partners are often challenged with finding innovative ways to make their visits more effective and fun. Here are some tips and activities to make each visit a helpful experience.



#### Caring for a Loved One with a Neurocognitive Disorder

Spending time with loved ones who suffer from neurocognitive disorders such as Alzheimer's, vascular dementia or a brain tumour can be difficult for family members and care givers. Despite the challenges, it is important to find ways to connect meaningfully regardless of the level of development or health problem. People with neurocognitive disorders have diminished resources to control or direct their behaviours. It is up to family members and staff such as Recreational Therapists to design activities that make the time both beneficial and fun.

Knowing some practical principles can make a difference.

For Example:

- Use a trusted "Model" to practice
- Know the person with the disease
- Identify and control external influences and modify the environment
- Design meaningful opportunities for activities
- Recreational Therapists are more successful when engaging the family in the therapeutic partnerships

But how can we make these principles both practical and manageable? Here are some basic guidelines:

1. Prepare for the task with appropriate ideas that fit with your loved one's interests, prepare supplies, equipment and space ahead of time, have a contingency plan and get help if needed.
2. Prepare your loved one by establishing visual eye contact, by attracting attention with appropriate touch, by establishing your role as caregiver and by getting agreement to accept your help.
3. Assist the person through the task by using Information, laughter, guides, beverages or finger foods.
4. Then celebrate their effort.

Source: *GentleCare*, Moyra Jones. (July 1999)

If you have ideas that have made the time with your loved one successful, please share by contacting Carol at [AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com](mailto:AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com)

### COVID-19 Jokes To Keep You Sane!

- Why do they call it the novel coronavirus? It's a long story!
- I washed my hands so much because of COVID-19 that my exam notes from 1995 resurfaced.
- What's the difference between COVID-19 and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*? One is a corona virus and the other is a Verona crisis.
- My husband purchased a world map and then gave me a dart and said, "Throw this and wherever it lands - that's where I'm taking you when this pandemic ends." Turns out, we're spending two weeks behind the fridge.

### Suggested Activities for People with Dementia

Submitted by Nodia Powell Bryan and Carol Dueck

Dementia does not mean your loved one cannot still enjoy their favourite hobbies or interests. With some adjustments, you can find great activities for people with dementia that can help their memory, increase their physical activity, and provide enjoyable and stimulating experiences. While it may take some extra work and creativity, all your effort will be worth it when you create experiences that you both love doing together. Here are some suggestions for family members to make your visit and essential care partner time with your loved one fulfilling for both of you.

Creative Art Projects are a fun way for your loved ones to express themselves, are good for tactile development and can be done anywhere, even virtually with a support worker. Arts and crafts options include non-toxic clay, water colour painting, sewing and more. They can make art projects in a directed way, such as painting a bird-house, or in a non-directed way that lets them have the independence to decide how to use the clay, paint or caring for flowers and plants.

Games are great activities for seniors with dementia who enjoyed them in the past. Depending on the extent of the dementia, some are still very capable of crossword puzzles and word searches. Simple jigsaw puzzles are a good way to engage your loved one's problem-solving skills. Checkers and dominos are also great simple games both of you can enjoy.

Cooking and spending time in the kitchen is a good way to interact with loved ones and to encourage healthy eating. If you have access to a kitchen, preparing and cooking food should be an easy opportunity to spend time together and follow simple recipes. Just remember to prioritize safety; only take out the ingredients you'll be using to avoid any confusion and monitor the stove burners. With just a few simple, step-by-step instructions, most seniors with dementia can be a great help in the kitchen.

Musical activities for people with dementia are great stimulating options, especially if your loved one was a former musician or singer. Encourage listening to music, singing or playing simple instruments, especially old family favourites.

Exploring nature outdoors provides healthy physical exercise and the opportunity to engage in conversation. Easy hikes and walks, bird watching and feeding animals allow your loved one to be immersed in nature and to be active in the community. Taking a walk, a picnic on the beach, or dog watching at the park are other good ways to enjoy the outdoors.

References:

- Mindfulness and Meditation for Seniors March 24, 2020
- Medicine Safety: What you Need to Know to Stay Safe March 12, 2020
- 5 Fun Indoor Activities for Seniors February 28, 2020

### Who Can Be A Member Of A Family Council?

Each Family Council is unique and may determine its own role and the responsibilities of its members consistent with the requirements of the LTCHA (Long-Term Care Homes Act). The ministry has clarified that each Family Council can determine the continued membership and participation of Family Council members after the death or transfer of a resident, as long as there is no conflict with the requirements in the LTCHA. For example, an individual Family Council can determine that the Family Member of a deceased resident can continue to be a member, ***even if the family member does not have a relationship with another resident in the home.*** (Note the highlighted words.) The above statement supersedes the words in the aforementioned Guide to the LTCHA of 2007.

So, the decision about membership after a resident has passed away is entirely up to your Family Council (not the Administrator). All you have to do is be specific about it in your Family Council's Terms of Reference.

### 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 the website for details on the following titles: ***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 FCN4 Advocacy Committee. To purchase any of these books, e-mail: Tom Carrothers at [carphaltonchapter@gmail.com](mailto:carphaltonchapter@gmail.com).

### FCN-4 Advocacy Committee Website

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

If you haven't been there lately you will want to check out our website. There is lots of new stuff including the notes from our 3rd Regional FCN4 meeting held on February 24th, our Achievements in 2020 and the Focus for 2021. If you did not get our December newsletter on essential caregivers, go to our website and read it there. Check the website for everything you need to know about dealing with COVID in LTC and where to get help if you need it as well as numerous links to the latest articles on a host of issues related to Long Term Care.

And, keep up to date by following us on our Facebook Page: [Family Council Network 4](#)