



Champlain Region Family Council Network

Chair's Report to 2021 Annual General Meeting

This is my first report to the Network's membership since the 2019 Annual General Meeting. The Network did not hold an AGM in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Little did we know at the time that we would not hold an AGM until May of 2021 and that the conditions that brought about last year's cancellation would still be with us. But now we have become accustomed to doing all manner of business by means of virtual gatherings. That said, this morning's meeting is a bit different with several moving parts. We are fortunate to have Brian Graham directing the next two hours; we anticipate a flawless event but ask you to bear with us if we encounter something unexpected!

We are very pleased that Dr. Jack Kitts, one of the Commissioners on Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission will join us at 10a.m. following our business meeting. As you know, the Commission's Final Report was released on April 30. All of us have had an opportunity to read it as well as the LTC Report of Ontario's Auditor General tabled in the Legislature on April 28. We are grateful that Dr. Kitts has agreed to address our meeting so soon after the Report was delivered to the Minister for Long-Term Care. Simply entitled LTC COVID-19 Commission: Final Report, the document addresses the range of issues that for so long have plagued long-term care in this Province and that were severely exacerbated by the pandemic.

The Network has been very active during these past months since COVID-19 first appeared in Canada. I want to acknowledge the many, continuous efforts of my colleagues on the Executive, as well as those of so many of you, family members who spoke out about your concerns and your fears for your family members residing in LTC homes in the Champlain Region of the Province. COVID not only put a spotlight on problems that were only exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. The effect was deeply felt by the residents, you as their families and staff, many of whom continued to do their best under devastating conditions.

As the impact of COVID on long-term care homes unfolded over the months, and directives and revised directives were issued, all of us were challenged to keep resident and family concerns in front of Ontario's politicians and policy makers. In many cases, these were the same concerns we had been raising long before the pandemic but to little or no avail. Each took on a new color and a new urgency during COVID; and new challenges emerged due to COVID and the responses to the virus that entered so many under-staffed, under-equipped and overwhelmed residences. In one bright spot, Ontario's LTC Staffing Study ('A better place to live, a better place to work: Ontario's Long-Term Care Staffing Plan 2021-2025') was released in July 2020. The report set the stage for a rethink of a critical aspect of LTC in our Province.

Even more significant was the launch of Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission. The Commission issued two very clearly worded Interim Reports in October and December 2020, at the height of COVID, bringing to the attention of the Minister for Long-Term Care and the public some of the most egregious failings in the system and calling on the Government of Ontario to address these matters, as well as the recommendations of the staffing study, immediately and without waiting for the Commission's final report.

The Executive has tried over these past months to keep you informed of these and other developments, and of the actions we have taken on your behalf. The Report from the Advocacy Committee to this AGM reviews these steps.

Throughout, we have been conscious of our duty to consult the members of the Network. Our message of May 30, 2020 sent to Family Council Chairs and others

was a commitment to be mindful of those in whose name our actions are taken. When possible, we have kept you apprised of our actions as they were unfolding. We have tried to share our messages to the Government and others with you in a timely manner. We have also shared other information we thought important to your participation in and support for our advocacy.

As part of that effort, we have held three sets of Zoom meetings with Family Council Chairs or their representatives. These have been helpful to us in hearing your views and we have reason to believe they were of value to our colleagues on Family Councils and to families of residents of the homes in our Region. Our colleague Janet Luloff prepared meticulous reports on these meetings and those reports were widely shared. Following the AGM, we will regularize these meetings, scheduling them on a quarterly basis and ensuring everyone has them in their calendars.

We have joined with the two other Family Council Networks in the Province to support one of Pat Armstrong's LTC research projects. Dr. Armstrong is on the faculty of York University and, as you know, has focussed on issues in long-term care, in Canada and widely in other countries. Supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, Dr. Armstrong and her colleagues are identifying standards, policies and conditions that can promote family involvement in long-term residential care during difficult times such as COVID-19. Each of the Networks has met with Dr. Armstrong and her team to provide our input. We each have also identified individual family members who have agreed to meet with the researchers.

Turning to the state of Family Councils in the Champlain Region, we have to report that only 29 of the 60 LTC homes have a Family Council. We think this is unfortunate and we encourage families in the other homes to make every effort to organize a Council. Each of us knows from experience the challenges in doing so, but it is important and warrants the continued effort. We encourage home Administrators and Liaison Staff to support and assist families and friends of residents to appreciate the value of a Family Council. Many Family Councils start with only a few members; but as word spreads in the home, and the importance

of collective voices raised on behalf of all residents of the home becomes evident, the value of a Family Council itself becomes clear. The Network will support your efforts to the best of our ability.

At this point, I want to acknowledge the tremendous hard and dedicated work of my colleagues on the Executive. They are a strong, hard-working and dedicated group of people. Of course the past year and more has been a very unusual time, but they have stepped up to the challenge over and over again. So my sincere thank you to each and every one of them: Eleanor Ryan, Doreen Rocque, Grace Welch, Mary Frances Taylor, Janet Luloff, Brian Graham and three members who have joined us since COVID struck: Anna Lyall, Jane Coyle and Richard Pell. A great team!

The Nominating Committee has reached out to the community to encourage family members to stand for election to the Executive. We understand that not everyone can commit to a seat on the Executive. But there is more than one way to support the work of the Network.

Since the onset of COVID, family members have stepped up to propose and then work on projects of value to the Network and we believe to all of the homes, residents and families in the Champlain Region. Some recent examples.

- Katherine Bennett (Family Council Chair at Manoir Marochel) joined with Executive member Anna Lyall in drafting our views on enhanced cooling requirements in LTC. In addition to advocating for air conditioning throughout the homes, our submission to the Provincial Government calls for appropriate temperatures during the warm weather, as well as attention to humidity, air quality and air exchange. Since we submitted our proposals, the Ontario Government has committed funding to address the issue of cooling, including resident rooms. Grace and her colleagues on the Advocacy Committee are closely monitoring the details of this response.
- Arnie Francis, a member of the Family Council at Fairview Manor in Almonte, proposed a survey of homes on the issues of payment options and home-to-family communications. Working in collaboration with the

Advocacy Committee, Arnie administered the survey and in record time widely shared a very interesting report. He has proposed a second survey which we will discuss with him following the AGM.

- Marilyn Colton, Chair of the Family Council at The Grove LTC home in Arnprior, has done extensive work on a project aimed at a better and broader appreciation of a person-centred care approach to LTC. Marilyn has kept the Network fully informed on the project and together we are looking for the most appropriate and efficacious roll out of her project.
- And Sarah Riley Mathewson, daughter of our Executive colleague Jane Coyle, is currently reviewing and helping to update our web site in consultation with Grace Welch.
- In 2019, Rob Patzer, then Chair of the Family Council at Grace Manor, represented the Network at the Bruyere Research Forum addressing the matter of deprescribing medications offered to LTC residents. The importance of family involvement in the establishment and regular review of residents' care plans was underscored. The Forum is entering a new phase of its work and once again Rob has been invited to work with Bruyere as a representative of the Network.
- Denis Lajoie, a former CRFCN District Coordinator, is always ready to assist the Network, whether with translation and revision, or as our link to Ontario's latest network, the Francophone Family Council Network. It aims to represent the interests of Family Councils in francophone and bilingual homes across Ontario, including those in the Champlain Region.
- And Mary Frances Taylor, a member of the Advocacy Committee, is co-leading with Rick Pell our contribution to the discussion of national standards for LTC. She is also engaged on the Ontario Health Teams file.

The Network would benefit greatly from help with communications including our social media presence; secretarial duties including minute-taking; and outreach and support of Family Councils, or of families in homes across the Region that do not yet have a Family Council.

There are many ways of working with and supporting the Network without committing to membership on the Executive. We are open to your suggestions and ideas; talk to one of us about our agenda and we will almost certainly find a way of benefitting from your ideas and your engagement.

A word about Ontario Health Teams. As you likely know, the Province is in the process of a significant reorganization of health care delivery. The cornerstone of this reorganization is Ontario Health Teams (OHTs). Upon completion of the reorganization, the Teams will assume overall responsibility for the delivery of health care to their defined populations. Despite an emphasis on the continuum of care that OHTs are mandated to offer their designated populations, we have been concerned that long-term care has not been explicitly identified in these plans. Eleanor Ryan and Mary Francis Taylor have established contact with most of the OHTs in the Champlain Region, participating in many of their planning and decision-making meetings. The Network is a signatory to their applications to the Ministry of Health to move forward in the planning and implementation process. Those applications have included clear references to long-term care as an integral part of the population each Team seeks to represent. The Report of the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission notes the importance of long-term care homes being integrated with the broader health care system and states that “Being part of an OHT should not be optional for LTC homes”.

As the OHTs develop, the Network anticipates that each will be looking for family members and caregivers to bring their perspectives to discussions around the Teams’ ‘care-giver and lived experience’ tables. If you think this might be an opportunity for you to contribute to these discussions at the OHT in your area of the Province, please contact Eleanor Ryan or Mary Frances Taylor.

It has been a full and eventful eighteen months for all of us. There is still much to be done to see LTC through the remaining months of COVID, hopefully into a much brighter future. The members of the Executive are committed to staying the course; we welcome your engagement in any way you wish to be involved.