



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

## Chair's Report: "Government Promises: Fulfilled or Forgotten?"

By Carol Dueck

The wheels of government policy, funding and implementation turn slowly. For those of us involved in Long Term Care (LTC) advocacy for decades, progress seems to move at a glacial pace. The pandemic shone a light on the flaws in our health system, in particular for LTC and home care. Admittedly, the Provincial Government has pledged and initiated many changes, but have we seen results?

Public attention is fickle. LTCs have fallen off the media radar as reports on affordability, climate change, and, oh yes, social conveniences such as wider access to beer and alcohol now dominate. Provincial and federal governments are also trying to buy votes with rebates - I would prefer to donate my rebate cheque to create "a living wage" for LTC staff!



Here is a limited report card on the improvements to the quality of life for residents in LTC.

### **Promise #1** - 30,000 more beds

- Despite frequent announcements of ribbon cutting for new LTC homes, it is very difficult to tally how many new or upgraded beds are currently available.
- Construction delays mean new beds will not be available until 2026 or later.
- Older homes unable to meet cost of building codes (e.g. air conditioning) are relinquishing their licences reducing the number of places available.

### **Promise #2** - Efficient access through community care admission

- Homes report long waiting lists
- Recent legislation to improve access to beds in hospitals and emergency departments has created the side effect that LTC beds are available only to those on urgent lists waiting in acute care.
- Families are fighting legislation that allows assessment and placement by case managers to a home not on the list chosen by resident or family. These LTCs could be 75 or 150 kilometers away.
- Families are facing charges of \$400 /day for refusing to accept LTC bed in Ontario. This has also reduced the availability of beds in homes offering specific cultural programs.

### **Promise #3** - Funding for 4 hours of care by Spring 2025

- Not all homes have or will have achieved this target of care hours, often related to staffing issues

### **Promise #4** - Staffing Crisis

- A bed is just a bed until there is staff to turn it into care for a resident.
- 8000 PSW and nursing vacancies were reported in 2023/24. We fear the numbers have changed little

this year. We will request provincial reports on retention and recruitment statistics.

- The use of expensive staffing agencies are gobbling up budgets without benefits to employees (see our article below on staffing agencies )
- Current staffing policies and workloads are leading to burn out for nurses, personal support workers (PSW) and other LTC staff.

**Promise 5:** PSW certification standards

- Not yet released and little information on timelines available which impacts recruitment, retention and quality of care
- Given staff shortages, training and education sessions are often not prioritized.

**Promise #6 - Inspection System**

- The inspection process pre-pandemic was inconsistent and emphasized punitive, not corrective measures. The processes all but stopped during the pandemic and prioritized only critical events.
- Work has started, albeit slow, to hire and train inspectors using a standardized system. We want to ensure that reviews are based on qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform decision making.
- Inspections must focus on outbreaks, infection control and the level of care for residents. While penalties are part of the process, particularly for re-occurring incidents, the objective is to have meaningful change and improvement in the LTC home for residents and staff.

Does our report card reflect what you see in your resident's LTC home? We want to hear your feedback – stories of successes and challenges. Our voices are stronger together.

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## **Another New Minister of Long-Term Care!**

**By Carol Dueck**

Members of the Family Council Network 4 Advocacy Committee, the Champlain Regional Family Council Network and the Northern Ontario Network met with the new LTC Minister in September to introduce our mandate and activities. The tone of the meeting with Minister Kusendova-Bashta was positive and constructive. As a former nurse, she is knowledgeable about LTC issues and has been busy visiting long term care homes across the province. She is deepening her understanding of the issues for both residents and staff.

The Minister is actively supporting changes to safely assess and treat residents in LTCs, reducing long, burdensome and potentially traumatic visits to Emergency Departments. This could include enabling registered nursing staff to manage intravenous medication and treatment on-site by paramedic staff.

Minister Kusendova-Bashta's grasp of person-centered care models and her health background simplifies our current advocacy efforts. We will however, continue to engage with her and other MPPs on how to create a "home atmosphere" for residents. We also discussed critical funding needs for LTCs and for long-term solutions.

Finally we explained the critical role of family councils in representing the voices of residents and families. The Minister readily agree to quarterly meetings, with our next meeting in January 2025. Do you have issues you would like us to raise? Contact us with your questions, concerns and ideas.

## Meet MPP Natalia Kusendova-Bashta!

By Peter Gnish



Natalia is our newest **Ontario Minister of Long Term Care**. She has served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario since 2018 representing the riding of Mississauga Centre as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Human and Molecular Biology from the University of Toronto and one in Nursing from Nipissing University. She speaks five languages: English, Polish, French, Czech and Slovak. Natalia is married to husband, Mina Bashta who is an Owner and Designated Manager at Skycare Pharmacy based in Newmarket, Ontario.

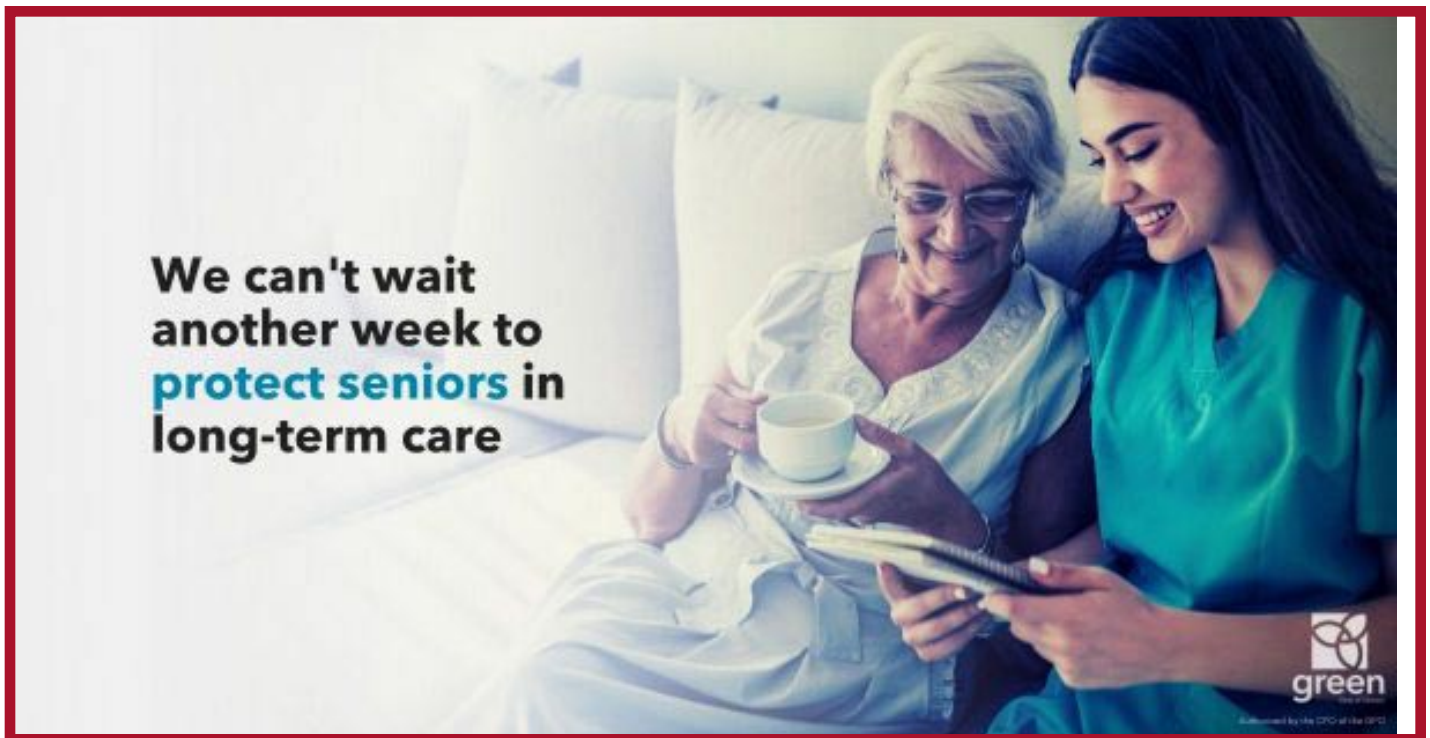
As a Registered Nurse, Natalia worked in the health care system in the Emergency Department at the Etobicoke General Hospital as well as the Vanier Centre for Women, Ontario's only female provincial Correctional facility. She also served as a Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officer for the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Peel Chapter, and was as a member of the Canadian Polish Congress National Executive Board. In September 2020, Kusendova-Bashta's bill to recognize the Franco-Ontarian flag as an emblem of the province of Ontario was passed by the Ontario legislature into law.

Her contact information is as follows:

Constituency Office: Unit 701, 50 Burnhamthorpe Rd. W. Mississauga On L5B 3C3

E-mail: [natalia.kusendovaco@pc.ola.org](mailto:natalia.kusendovaco@pc.ola.org)

Telephone: 905-890-1901



### **Wanted! One person to serve on the FCN-4 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 FCN-4 Advocacy Committee to learn more!

[AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com](mailto:AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com)

# IMPACT OF STAFFING AGENCIES ON LONG TERM CARE IN ONTARIO

By Tom Carrothers

Staffing agencies greatly influence and impact long-term care in Ontario, especially recently due to workforce shortages and high turnover.

Key points about their impact include:

- 1. Addressing Staffing Shortages:** Staffing agencies provide a flexible workforce to fill short-term gaps in LTC facilities, especially during peak times or emergencies. This can help maintain adequate staffing levels and ensure residents receive critical care.
- 2. Quality of Care:** Staffing agencies can influence the quality of care provided. Advantageously, agencies can bring in experienced staff quickly; however high staff turnover can disrupt continuity of care and personal connections. This is crucial for building trust and for residents with complex needs.
- 3. Cost Implications:** Staffing agencies charge a premium for services straining already stretched budgets and drive-up wages without benefits or security.
- 4. Training Challenges:** Workers from staffing agencies may not be familiar with specific policies or procedures of a long-term care facility. Constantly providing training and orientation for new workers is costly and time consuming. Poor training can lead to challenges in delivering consistent care.
- 5. Workforce Dynamics:** The reliance on staffing agencies can affect the morale and dynamics of permanent and temporary staff. There may be feelings of resentment or concerns about job security, roles and responsibilities.
- 6. Resident experiences:** the constant change of staff can impact the “home atmosphere” and maintaining personal relationships with residents.
- 7. Temporary Solutions vs. Long-term Strategies:** While staffing agencies can provide short-term relief, long-term workforce strategies include improving working conditions, fair wages, and developing career pathways for staff in the long-term care sector.
- 8. COVID-19 Pandemic Impact:** The pandemic highlighted the fragility of the long-term care workforce and increased the reliance on staffing agencies. As the sector recovers, we must build a more resilient workforce.

Overall, while staffing agencies play a crucial role in addressing immediate staffing needs in Ontario’s long-term care sector, it’s important to balance their use with strategies aimed at creating a stable and skilled workforce for the future.

We encourage all family and friends of those in long term care residences to advocate with their home, MPP and the media on the need for stable staffing and personalize care.

## 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](mailto:carphaltonchapter@gmail.com).

## Attracting and Retaining Family Council Members

By Janet Volkes

Given the challenges in recruiting and retaining members, the Family Council of Ontario has created a resource, "Your guide to Starting and Maintaining a Family Council ". You can access it at:

<https://fco.org/resources/your-guide-to-starting-and-maintaining-a-family-council>

Some valuable highlights are:

- Create a pamphlet explaining your family council's activities, meeting times, and contact information. Ask your home to include it in the welcome package for new residents. Consider joining the welcoming committee to greet new residents and families.
- Personal contact matters. Wear name tags showing you are a Family Council member and encourage conversation. Ask the Administration if you can set up a table in the lobby during busy times to create awareness.
- Ensure the terms of reference allow for members to remain on Family Council after their loved one has passed away. Peer support is so important, and this helps ensure you don't lose the valuable "corporate memory" and experiences.
- Have interesting guest speakers including various team members from your home.
- Send out personal invites to new family members.
- If your home hosts Family Social Events like barbecues or teas, ask to join and talk to families about the Family Council.
- Post a good quality flyer in advance of your meeting in prominent places in the home.
- Ask if the LTC can add family council information on their website.
- Be innovative and creative. Be open to new solutions, ideas or community associations. For example, a local Family Council is connecting with local charities to donate clothing and furniture after the loss of loved ones in their home.
- Ensure your Family Council is a safe and open space for dialogue. Acknowledge challenges and difficult situations while focusing on problem solving and supporting each other.

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

**Date: November 26, 2024    Time: 1:00 -3:30 p.m.    This is a ZOOM Meeting**

#### **Topic:**

***"The Unexpected Journey of Caring: The Transformation of Loved One to Caregiver"***

#### **Guest Speakers:**

**Donna Thomson**, Caregiver, Author & Educator, McMaster University

**Dr. Zachary White**, Professor of Care Communications,  
Furman University, South Carolina

#### **To Register:**

Send an e-mail to Carol Dueck, Chair of our FCN-4 Advocacy Committee,  
at [AdvocacyFCN4@protonmail.com](mailto:AdvocacyFCN4@protonmail.com)

Include: Your Name, the name of your Long-Term Care Home,  
and your e-mail address and phone number.



## Long Term Care Navigation Guide

By Janet Volkes

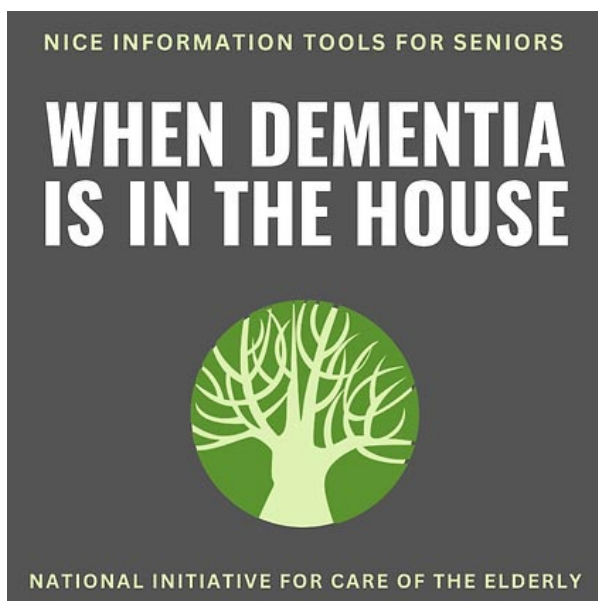
Family Councils of Ontario (FCO), under the direction of Liane Pelissier & Cathleen Edwards, have produced a wonderful resource outlining the many aspects of moving into long term care. The long waited Long Term Care guide is now available online. Access it now at:

<https://fco.ngo/news/making-the-move-to-long-term-care>

Learn how to apply for a bed, understand costs and financial support, prepare for move-in day, know whom to contact for issues, understand long-term care home staffing, visiting guidelines, and find other helpful organizations. Liane and Cathleen sought input from the community and held focus groups with stakeholders across the province to prepare this guide.

This resource is also helpful for those with loved ones already in Long Term Care. Share it with friends and family who might need it in the future to make their transition smoother. You can find the guide on the FCO website. Interested in a hard copy? FCO is seeking funding for the printing of hard copies based on demand.

Please visit [www.surveymonkey.com/r/QL9VNH](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QL9VNH). To share your opinion.



### WHEN DEMENTIA IS IN THE HOUSE!

#### Information Tools for Seniors

When your spouse is diagnosed with a terminal, degenerative illness, you suffer devastating loss with no apparent resolution. Nothing about this journey is simple or painless. But if you can tend to yourself once in a while, some rewards may surprise you.

Link to Information Tool web page:

<https://www.nicenet.ca/articles/when-dementia-is-in-the-house-advice-for-parents>

### 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](#)

**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](mailto:AdvocacyFCN4@ProtonMail.com)