

NPF HEALTH COMMITTEE REPORT ON LONG TERM CARE CRISIS

Kathleen Jamieson, Chairperson

“Do not go gentle into that good night ... Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.”

(Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas)

Our seniors, whom died near imprisoned and alone in Long-Term Care (LTC) homes across Canada as hostages to COVID-19, did not go gentle into that good night. As nationally reported, patients are trapped in their rooms, unknowingly exposed to infection, and too often living or dying in appalling conditions. Not one single familiar person is permitted to be with them or allowed to visit even though PSWs, nurses, volunteer students and even army personnel come and go. It's as if they were no longer sentient human beings with human rights.

An extensive amount of research has shown that there are many serious problems with the business of Long-Term Care in Canada and that senior's care suffers. Somehow that information hasn't entered into the public consciousness until now.

Many reputable national organizations have pleaded with all levels of government to address LTC regulations, increased hands on care and the lack of government investment. Without doubt all too deaf ears, crickets. Instead of improving the lives of our most vulnerable the Provincial and Federal governments have opened up and expedited the privatization of Long-Term Care. A highly sought after investment complete with patients having guaranteed government funding/benefits are bought and sold and marketed internationally. Subsequently the profit motive then rules not the quality of care. Are we ok as a great nation translating our ailing elder population or our senior's well being to a commodity?

Statistics Canada admits that it has collected little in the way of statistics about who is living in long-term care. What they know is that there are more likely to be women than men, more likely people who were live alone, more likely people who do not own their own home, and that they are more likely to be Canadian-born women than immigrant women. Given what we know about senior women's poverty, these statistics suggest is that the income and social inequality that many women experience throughout their lives persist into the treatment they receive in their final years.

All Canadians need to mourn and learn from this unparalleled pandemic death rate; currently 80% of all deaths from COVID-19 in Canada. All government bodies must answer the call for a full and transparent public inquiry to know who these seniors were and why they had to self preserve in LTC and or to die alone. Statistics Canada revealed the vast majority of seniors; 93.2% of all seniors over 65 years of age, and the

70% over 85 years who do not live-in long-term care had not become such victims of the COVID virus. And, indeed, they may be receiving support services in their own home from the same care aides that work in LTC homes but do not seem to be dying unexpectedly. We need an honest review and a national discussion for the protection of our most vulnerable now!

It's most painful as advocates to hear reports from traumatized care aides and medical staff that cared for LTC patients that they suffered and died alone. Why do we not hear from the residents themselves? This questionable silence or sad face in the window of institutional buildings must be our national call to action.

We now ask that our federal government set up an independent national inquiry to investigate the circumstances that led up to these tragedies in long term care homes across Canada. It's imperative, if this history is not to repeat itself, that we safe guard national standards and improved regulations to ensure high quality senior's care. We believe that all Canadians now understand that vital care for our most vulnerable seniors must be publicly provided versus private and for profit. That we uphold public accountability in reporting directly to Canadians versus profits to shareholders pockets. Together, with senior's voices at the table, let's bake a whole new cake!