

Speakers Series

October 3rd, 2020

SWHR Committee Report

Karen Henderson, founder of the Long Term Care Planning Network (LTCPN), has a long history in the needs of aging Canadians, having been in dementia care for fourteen years prior to the creation of LTCPN. The Long Term Care Planning Network is Canada's leading on and off-line resource centre for aging and long term care (LTC). Karen is an educator, speaker, writer, media commentator, publisher and consultant in the field of long term care and has developed a renowned seminar series, has established eldercare web sites, produces newsletters, and has participated in TV/video series. Along with her Long Term Care Planner, Karen is internationally recognized for her key aging and long term care educational and resource tools.¹

Karen's presentation, entitled **Long Term Care: The Past, The Present/COVID-19 and The Future**, shone a bright light on key issues in long term care. It should be noted that, as Ms. Henderson pointed out, these issues are longstanding: it is the impact of the COVID pandemic on LTC problems which has caught the public's attention.

The fact that LTC remains outside the Canada Health Act, putting it into a provincially determined extended care position and thus uninsured, means the industry does not have to adhere to any national standards. Our CFUW Emergency Resolution on long term care also highlighted this inequity.

Karen noted that the 'system' of LTC is biased toward staffing with women, so gender inequities exist not only at the resident level (more residents of LTC are female) but also with those providing care. Wages are poor as are hours, resulting in care workers servicing clients in a number of institutions daily.

A surprise to me is that Canada has one of the highest rates of institutionalisation of elderly in the world (1 in 3) and allocates little of its LTC budget to home care (13% versus the average of 35% across the OECD). In fact, many indicators of poor care doomed Ontario's elderly in LTC with the arrival of COVID – a largely private system with too many beds, too few hours of individual care, a high proportion of patients in 4 bed wards, patients with increased medical complexity and a government unwilling or unable to adopt recommendations made to improve LTC and prevent another debacle when a second wave of COVID hits. Added to this are care homes with poor facilities for infection control, inadequate supplies of personal proactive equipment, no updated pandemic protocols, understaffing, cross contamination certainties and fewer government inspections further contributing to the COVID carnage in Ontario's LTC facilities.

The near future is bleak, according to Karen. The longer picture, too, is complicated by a lack of government transparency as to LTC money allocation and accountability.

Will things change? Difficult to say. Class action suits against private LTC home owners Revera Retirement Living, Sienna Senior Living, Chartwell and Responsive Group are underway. In the meantime, Karen recommends that Ontario Council members continue to push for a commission instead of a public inquiry into LTC inadequacies in Ontario. CFUW OC advocacy should address staffing in LTC and demand sustainable, transparent funding. Other recommendations included joining CanAge and SSAO, and take all steps possible to remove the stigmas of ageism around ageing/long term care.

Ms. Henderson also left us with an abundance of resources to support our advocacy work, found at the end of her presentation.

1. <https://www.ltcplanningnetwork.com/professional-advisers/about-ltc-planning-network/>