

To:

May 17, 2018

The Honourable Adrian Dix, M.L.A.
Minister for Health
Government of British Columbia
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Sunridge Place Family Council, to voice our collective support for the request submitted by the Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils (VIAFC) to develop regulations that will ensure that families, through their Councils, have a real voice and influence on how those who reside in these facilities are cared for.

It has been our experience that the level of *meaningful* input that our Family Council has depends entirely on the management style of the Site Leader and the value that the directors and owners of the companies that operate the care home have. In fact, there was a time when a directive came down from the VP of Park Place, parent company that owns Sunridge Place, to ban the Family Council from meeting at the care home along with a refusal to recognize the elected council or the council itself. The situation developed due to ongoing issues surrounding inadequate care and the fact that despite trying to communicate concerns and provide possible solutions, no one paid any attention or saw family members as an asset. Happily, we are once again permitted to meet within Sunridge, but only after two years without a Council along with some negotiations by those of us who weren't a part of Sunridge when things went wrong.

More recently, we had a Site Leader who refused to hear any concerns, suggestions to improve care, or involve members on different committees. Her style of leadership was very top-down, resulting in families having absolutely no meaningful voice and being left no option but to use licensing as the only way to ensure that proper care was given.

Licensing is not the method that families want to use in order to participate or the atmosphere that they want to have their resident in. We want to be proactive and positive in our dealings with staff and management. We recognize that there will be issues, but we also believe that our combined life experiences and skills are an asset that needs to be included, and that this is best done through family councils, as it gives a cohesive voice and space where all partners, including residents either on their own behalf or through their representative, can share information, concerns and ideas.

I include these examples to underscore how tenuous any Family Council's level of involvement and very existence is. The current regulations pertaining to Family Councils are so vaguely worded and open to interpretation that it leaves Councils vulnerable to the whims and attitudes of individual Site Leaders and site owners.

Ensuring that Family Councils are seen as vital to the quality of care and life of those living within the facility, is akin to how important it is to have Parent Advisory Councils within the school system; and parents were only seen as an asset once their right to exist and their value was enshrined in regulations. The thing that gives PACs a real voice isn't only declaring that they had a right to exist, it is in the wording which clearly states that they are *equal* partners. Family Councils need that level of support to change the culture. Our hope is that the regulations will include wording that removes any ambiguity surround the status of a Family Council within any type of care facility, whether private, for-profit, not-for-profit, or operated by a health authority, and that recognition of the rights of families to have a collective voice within a system that the lives of the ones they love depend will be strongly communicated.

Sincerely,



Jeannette Humphreys, Chair
Sunridge Place Family Council
250 715-7973 or bytheseabc@yahoo.ca