



Montreal, November 18, 2023 – Story 1

KATHRYN: My mother, she was very sick, and they wanted to, the social worker wanted to place my mother in a care home was, which was on the far eastern end of the island. So basically, it meant like, it really would have been a huge hardship for us to go and see my mother. I mean, and who else would see her? They said, “Well, that that’s your only choice.”

So fortunately, there was a very empathetic, a compassionate doctor, who was who was my mother’s gerontologist and I said to her, I said, “If my mother is there, she’ll die, you know.” And we were writing letters, too. And we actually had a meeting with some of the higher ups when I was at the Verdun Hospital, and I said to them, I said, “You know my mother can’t go there.” So, they actually gave us a second option, which I know that was not offered to other people.

It was about a year and a half of trying to get a place, so she got into a place, and it was actually a very nice place in Lachine. But what I noticed; I mean they were they were terribly understaffed. Which is a big problem here. But what I also noticed was the préposé [auxiliary worker in Quebec] moved between the floors. So, some of the time they were some of her préposé a worked in emergency. Sometimes they worked on other floors in the hospital because her extended care was attached to Lachine Hospital. So, I’m no medical doctor, but I know enough about infection and disease, about how that spreads.

So anyway. The first year she was there, there was no particular outbreak of anything, but she had arrived sort of at the tail end of the in April, I believe, at the tail end of when that would have happened. But the following year there was a lot of cases of what was called the flu then, and people were dying on her floor. And the year the spring that she died, the spring of 2019, there have been 4 people I don’t know how many people would have been on that floor. I don’t actually recall, but in her wing, which would have been maybe 8 people, 4 died. And in the first round my mother didn’t catch the flu but the second round she did. And she basically - it wasn’t clear what, I mean, which she died of - but it was complications to the flu. And there was no special precautions being taken. And there was no, it seemed to be, there was no awareness that that disease was going to spread into this very fragile population.

So, for me, the huge casualties in Quebec for seniors with COVID were a foregone conclusion because all of the situation that was set up was there for that to happen, and that happened before. Like, I have a nephew who’s a journalist, and I said to him, “You know you could, you could write about what’s going on right now.” And this is before COVID.

And there was a sense that because there was such pressure on the system that that you know somebody died. Well, you know, you had 24 hours to remove your loved ones possessions because there was somebody that was going to be in there like 24 hours later. So, when my mother died, we had to have everything cleaned out by the next day of her room.

And, you know, my mother had been there for almost 2 years, so she, you know, had real attachment. People had attachment to her. There was no, there was no space, no place to grieve any of that. I went back about a month later, and I brought flowers and thanked the people. But it was like that was it. You’re dead. You’re gone, you know.

There was no acknowledgement about that part of life. And of course, everybody who was in these extended care places, everybody knew that they were gonna die. But there was no, you know there, unlike in a palliative care setting, there was no acknowledgement of that. So yeah.