

On May 17, 2020 at 8:35 a.m. I received a call and the light in my heart completely dimmed. I lost my “anchor” in life, my purpose, my confidant, my very best friend – my beautiful mother Anne Sulyma passed away. She was my world and I will never be the same.

My mother became a resident at Schlegel Village Humber Heights LTC facility on June 25, 2018. It was heartbreaking when we had to put her in a nursing home as she had asked me to promise her that she would never have to go to one and although I told her I might not be able to keep this promise to her that if she ever had to go into one – it would indeed be the best – my brother and I would make certain of that. It was a very sad day for all of us when we had to put her in the car and take her to Humber Heights and initially she did not want to be there but over a little time, we convinced her that she was in a good place and the administrative staff and nurses convinced her and us that they would look after her like she was “one of their own”. They assured us that she would be very well protected and always kept safe. They outright lied. Within the two years she was there we had numerous complaints which were addressed over and over but to no avail. They always told us what they thought we wanted to hear but there was never any follow up. We voiced the term “negligence” on many occasions and letters were sent to Mr. Jamie Schlegel – CEO and President of Schlegel Villages – not even receiving the courtesy of a response. However, as we were still able to come into the nursing home, my brother and I continued to make every effort to maintain that she was fed foods she would eat, bathed, changed and had the comforts she so deserved.

Humber Heights failed her. This all ended in March 2020 when they went into lockdown because of the pandemic. We later learned that Schlegel Village Humber Heights knew about COVID-19 at the beginning of January 2020 but did absolutely nothing to prepare their staff nor the residents for what was to come in a very short period of time – death sentences for those who could do nothing for themselves. As family we were left helpless and at times, for many, completely hopeless. The staff had very poor PPE (personal protective equipment) provided, were barely educated as to how to deal with the residents throughout this lockdown and were left frightened to go into the resident’s rooms. My mother often told me by phone that only occasionally did staff wear any masks or gloves when entering her room. She even asked them about it but was never given any answer. The floor my mother was on had the worst cases of deaths and COVID in the LTC side. The retirement side was horrendously hit with the virus and many died. Because my mother was quite cognitive and could still speak to us on the phone she would voice to me over and over again that she was not getting fed, she was left in soiled clothes, cold and wet and even though she rang her call-bell – no one came. Throughout her stay she had 4 documented cases of pneumonia. I called **EVERY SINGLE DAY** to the nursing home to make sure that she was getting fed and they said she received her tray. What they failed to say was that no one purposefully came in to feed her even knowing she could no longer feed herself. How could these staff members go home at night, eat a hot meal, take a shower knowing full well what they had left behind? Where was the compassion but even more so where was their conscience?

My mother did not die from COVID but instead, she died senselessly from starvation and neglect. She had no mental stimulus from staff as they were afraid to go into her room and staffing was extremely limited, leaving her isolated and to completely fend for herself which she could not do as she was no longer mobile. On the evening her first great-granddaughter was born (April 23), my mother was rushed

to the hospital from what was claimed to be hypoxia and the doctor said she would die. She never came out again. She never touched food again. She died shortly thereafter at the hospital.

It is imperative that there be justice and accountability for all of these people, including my mother, who did not have to die this way. Schlegel Village Humber Heights not only had a legal obligation to keep the residents safe and protected, but they had a moral obligation. Each resident within this LTC facility deserved to go out of this world with dignity and respect – within their lifetime they earned it. Instead they were cast aside and ignored like they were garbage thrown out to the curb. If there was not even protection for the staff, how was there ever to be proper protection for the residents? We are learning more and more everyday that these private long term care facilities only care about lining their own pockets and they don't care what happens inside these facilities – no matter how many times you approach them. The Government **must STOP** these long term care nursing homes from ever doing this again in the future. We will all get older and the majority of us will require the use of these facilities and it must be mandated by the Government that we are all going to have somewhere to go that will look after us, protect and keep us safe when we are no longer capable of doing this for ourselves. When there is a crisis and know people can die – they must be obligated to take every precautionary means to look after these individuals – keep them safe using all they have within their powers. Schlegel Village Humber Heights LTC facility failed drastically to do this. This facility blamed the Government and the Ministry of Health did nothing before it was too late for so many.

Please, I beg of you, don't let all of these lives that have been lost be in vain and have died needlessly suffer even more indignation and disrespect by our Government allowing this to continue. The families who have been left behind and who will have an empty chair at the holidays are fighting to try and make some sense of all of this – but instead we only feel abandoned by our Government and guilty because we could do nothing about any of this. I love my mother with all of my heart and all the money in the world will never make up for this loss but it is my obligation and responsibility to her – as it is YOURS – that we look after those that are forthcoming into these facilities. Remember, it could be you or yours next. You have the means to stop these type of atrocities – step up and do something about it! End these privately funded nursing homes from ever allowing this to happen again.

Sincerely,

Patricia Korchuk – Daughter