



Remarks for AGM – Sue VanderBent  
May 22, 2008  
(Check against delivery)

Good Afternoon Everybody and Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> OHCA AGM.

I hope that everyone has seen their copy of the Annual Report which is in your package as it gives you some great information about all of our work in the past year.

To begin my Annual Report to you as your Executive Director, I would like to read you a letter that I received from a lady that I have been carrying on a conversation with for the past 2 ½ years.

With her name changed and with her permission, I am going to read her very first letter to the Association. I haven't changed a word because it was so touching and because I believe that it hits at the core of what we do every day.

*Dear Sue*

*With this little note I hope to get some moral support, I suppose, in regard to taking my husband, George, home from hospital for palliative care. In short, he is 80 years old, has enjoyed fine health until three years ago, then had a series of seizures, which gradually affected his mobility and speech. Four weeks ago he had another seizure, and was taken to hospital, where two days later he suffered a severe setback. However, he weathered the crisis, and for the last two weeks has been in the CCU unit of McNab hospital in Smithville. The doctor thought we ought to try it there for a week or two to see if physiotherapy would bring back any mobility or speech, but very soon it was decided there was no improvement possible. There seems no reason for him to remain in hospital, but it is an uphill battle to get him home. Both the doctor and the CCAC manager seem to think he would be best in a nursing home, as his care would sap my strength very quickly.*

*The only positive ones were the Palliative Associations, who forwarded some very useful information. I'm sorry if this message does not concern you, but my daughter printed off your website for me, and as ex-Hamiltonians, I'm looking for any support. My husband worked at Dofasco for 40 years, and we lived on Ryan Ave. for 25 years. Now we are living close to our daughter so we can support each other, as her husband has cancer.*

*Is home care still so much in its infancy that we must fight for getting our loved ones home??  
Thanks for even taking the time to read this note,*

*Sincerely, Rose Johnson*



## **We all know a 'Rose', don't we?**

We all know that this type of situation is taking place every day, across Ontario.

People get caught in a relatively unknown system that doesn't quite respond to her needs or to the needs of her family, which, like most families is complicated and has many other issues to cope with. Home care isn't understood by most people until they have to use it.

Because of our name and because of our website url, [www.homecareontario.ca](http://www.homecareontario.ca), OHCA receives emails and calls every day from people like Rose, looking for care – if you don't believe it, look at pg 4 of your Annual Report to see the growing number of visitors searching your websites for home care in 2007-08.

It is this kind of letter and on-going conversation that fuels our understanding of what has to be done to improve our sector and that is where the Ontario Home Care Association our responsibility comes in as the 'Voice of Home Care in Ontario' (Annual Report page 3)

We must speak out as industry leaders and collectively, with our other partners, such as OCSA, OACCAC and others, about the needs of people to receive care in their homes and communities. Over the past 2 ½ years, Rose has needed a lot of support. She needed practical things like a bed, other medical equipment and supplies, pharmacy assessments because her husband had problems with pills, the support of a good family doctor and a home care team and respite for herself because as we know she is still the major caregiver. She is lucky because she has a large family but they are spread out all over the country.

On that issue, a key piece of advocacy work this year has been the creation of the Joint CCAC-SPA (Service Provider Agency) Committee. I have high hopes for this Committee because it is composed of organizations and Associations that have diverse roots, but that also have a sincere interest in making sure that Rose and thousands like her, gets her husband home and keep him home. The Joint CCAC-SPA committee looks at the interface between the CCACs, their contracted service providers and clinical staff, the community support agencies, and medical equipment and supplies. In my Executive Director's report to members, you can find a useful chart that shows you the extent of the work that we are undertaking as a group.

We have long sought a place where we can have a mature forum to discuss the issues of the mutual interdependencies between purchasers and providers of home care, and this can truly take on issues related to:

- a more sophisticated approach to procurement that emphasizes stability and continuity of care for staff and clients
- the needs of health human resources,
- the advancement of information technology,
- the introduction of new business processes and also
- how to achieve meaningful accreditation and client satisfaction surveys that help us understand what our clients believe about our service



I believe that this committee will grow and mature to be about more than just procurement and will start to tackle the really big issues before us, like the fact that the home care budget for CCACs has still not recovered from the effects of cuts made way back in 2001.

Rose needed a lot of support to bring her husband home. In the end, she received some publicly funded home care, some community supports through a transfer-payment agency and she paid for some care privately to top up the services. This is now the typical pattern for many Ontarians.

The OHCA is proud to represent a broad range of home care and social care providers who deliver care privately to people like Rose. These growing group of OHCA members are always included in any opportunities that OHCA can find for training, information, access to our website and advocacy. This even includes the work that we are doing with the Joint CCAC-SPA group, who we are slowly educating about the extent and diversity of care Ontarians are already receiving outside of the publicly funded system. Many of our members who provide care privately have participated in U-First! educational sessions and have reported much success for their staff.

The OHCA believes in quality.

This is why

- the OHCA hosts educational sessions for the Board and members
- we write position papers about issues like 'safety in the home', home care's role in system management issues like ALC, 'creating an Age-Friendly society' and 'Competing for Quality in Home care'. (see page 4).
- we want to take our MPPs to work with us to show them that home and community care is not just 'hospital/institution lite'.
- we have to explain the clinical significance and necessity for Ontarians to have access to types of providers, nurses, therapies and PSWs
- we continue to meet with LHINs, politicians, MOHLTC and Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Children and Youth Services staff and
- we make presentations regarding the Provincial Budget and the submission to the Federal Standing Special Senate Committee on Aging

It takes un-ending patience and perseverance to keep on explaining again and again why home care is unique and different and policies, processes and attitudes about care cannot just simply be transferred from the institution to the home. This is a big part of our advocacy work as an Association.

The OHCA believes that to support people like Rose, we need competent organizations with strong internal infrastructures to support the work and educational needs of a largely decentralized, mobile workforce serving over 500,000 Ontarians annually.

The OHCA believes that all organizations, regardless of tax status, wishing to provide care to Ontarians like Rose, should be able to compete fairly with others to demonstrate its performance and capability. It is for this reason that, politically, the OHCA will continue to



advocate for a system that provides for a quality-driven, stable home care system, with longer contracts and growing and adequate funding for the publicly –funded services as well as continued acknowledgement that additional private services can and should be respected, recognized and available to Ontarians as they require them. We believe that Rose deserves no less.

So, what about Rose? I confess to you that when I read her very first e-mail, even I, the inveterate optimist was not too confident about the outcome.

But, I underestimated Rose and her family. While OHCA has intervened and provided some assistance along the way, it is mostly her determination to keep him at home that has made this such a success story from my perspective.

You will be glad to know that happily I heard from Rose last week - George, is still at home and I have decided to let her have the last word.

*Dear Sue,*

*It is so long that I have sent you any news that I am ashamed of myself.*

*George continues with us although he is getting weaker. It is now almost two years since our "fight" to get him home, and the scary time when I thought we would never be able to pay for all the extra things we had to get, like hospital beds and pills, but we managed. Our homecare worker's hours have slowly been cut and I now bathe him myself before breakfast. He is not as "mobile" as he was before, and I don't think he will be in the wheelchair any more, but he is ever patient and pleasant and grateful for anything we do for him.*

*Just read your letter to the editor in the Star, as well as the letter above it on the subject of homecare, and thought I should reply to your note. I have read Carol Goar's columns on homecare too over these past two years, and wrote to her. She wrote me a personal letter back, very encouraging.*

*Well, must run. George will have finished his section and will soon have to submit to his bed bath before getting his breakfast. Shaving too, not his favorite, but I want him to look his best for when the daughters show up. But I want to thank you for all the time you have taken to ease our case, and write comforting messages, Thanks again for your quick reply, keep advocating homecare, it works!*

*Most sincerely, Rose.*

It is my strong belief that our work as an Association must concern itself with creating a system that meets the needs Ontarians as they grow in their expectations to receive care at home and all the work that we have done in the past year that you can read about in the Annual Report stems from this goal.



We're lucky because Rose did not accept the status quo 2 ½ years ago and there are hundreds of thousands more like her. OHCA has to keep moving forward in our advocacy efforts on every front to make sure that we don't let them down. As the inveterate optimist, I also want to say that although we have a job to do, but we must not forget the power of the people to demand change and the fact that even though change happens slowly, it does happen.

Finally, I would like to say, "Thanks Rose, for keeping us (and me!) focused on the needs of Ontarians for a better home and community care system that meets all your needs to live and age independently at home'.

Thank You