

Spring/Summer 2026



SEASONS

Celebrating the Seasons of Life
For Residents, By Residents



Thriving - Not Just
Surviving
in Long-Term Care

Celebrating the
2025 SCALA Award
Recipient

Behind Every Door -
Life Stories Project at
The Rekai Centres

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SEASONS

Published twice a year, Seasons contains news and information of interest to those living and working in Ontario long-term care homes.

Story Submission

To share a story, please email [Stephanie Buosi](mailto:sbuosi@ontarc.com) at sbuosi@ontarc.com with the following information:

- Your article (300 words max)
- Submission title and author
- Pictures
- Quotes - we love hearing about resident involvement and reactions.

Contact OARC

4261 Highway 7 East, Suite # A14-360
Markham, ON L3R 9W6
T 905-731-3710 | F 905-731-1755
Toll Free 1-800-532-0201

info@ontarc.com | www.ontarc.com

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Cover photo: Yvette Poirier, resident of The Reikai Centre at Sherbourne Place, shows off her Life Story. Read Behind Every Door, page 10 for the full article.



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The views shared in this publication are those of OARC and do not reflect those of the Province.

Welcome to the Spring/ Summer Issue of Seasons

The changing of the seasons is one of the many wonderful things that define the climate and rhythm of life in our province. The transition from winter through spring and into summer inspires energy, fresh ideas, and a desire to “get out there” and get things done... and getting things done is what this edition of *Seasons* is all about.

Belonging. Influencing. Thriving. Remembrances. Legacies. These themes are reflected by Resident Leaders and other contributors throughout these pages.

Our late, much-loved, and highly respected Sharron Cooke left such an enduring legacy—one that is honoured in the Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award (SCALA). On behalf of the OARC Board of Directors, I offer an enthusiastic congratulations to Algonquin Nursing Home for being selected as last year’s recipient. Their multi-generational, collaborative event was transformative and meaningful to all who participated. I was so touched, and know you will be too, by the details of the event, reflected in the feelings expressed by one of the residents who shared that getting out into the local community “made me feel alive again — like I belong.” Is that not what each of us wants? Is this not one of the common threads in the human experience—belonging, and feeling seen and heard?



Mary Nestor, Chair,
OARC Board of Directors

The theme of belonging continues in a powerful article about engagement, involvement, and contribution; be inspired by Jennifer Brown’s compelling words describing what it truly means when she writes that she is “still engaged, still involved, still contributing.” She also reflects on how her active involvement in OARC has brought additional meaning and purpose to her life.

One of the pillars of OARC’s work is to support residents in shaping the place they call home. Each article in this edition illustrates how this can be done. The Art of the Possible. It takes time and commitment from every person in a long-term care home—a whole-home approach. It can be done, and it is being done. This edition’s contributors are leading the way.

Dive in. Read. Enjoy. Be inspired!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Nestor", with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end.

THRIVING Not Just Surviving in Long-Term Care



By: Jennifer Brown
OARC Resident Leader

The first three months are the hardest. You're probably exhausted if, like me, you brought yourself in. Relax! You'll get plenty of help here. Maybe even if, again like me, autonomy is key to your survival. There are people here, kind, supportive people, who will make your bed, help you with daily hygiene, wash and put away your clothes, cook for you, even help you eat, if you want. They will talk to you, walk with you, play games with you, even watch a little TV with you. You'll have access to physiotherapy, a hair salon, medical care and the occasional outing. You can get involved in all of this, some of it, or even opt-out entirely. It's your call. My advice, look for what may not be immediately apparent, a way to do only what you absolutely enjoy, something that made you happy in the past. You'll find it here.

In my case, I got involved in the actual management of the home itself. I started writing articles. About life within the home. Then about my home's place within the long-term care (LTC) community. A few of these were published by a national newspaper, which led to interviews on radio and TV Interviews which led, in one instance, to a call from a total stranger, who liked what I had to say, and became a friend. I also wrote a series of profiles on residents currently living in the home.

At the same time, I joined Residents' Council, a government- mandated group of residents who function as the

“

My advice, look for what may not be immediately apparent, a way to do only what you absolutely enjoy, something that made you happy in the past.

voice of everyone who lives here. As a member of Residents' Council, I have created and facilitated new recreation programs; sat on hiring committees for various staff positions; formed and been a member of two Food Committees, one

for residents, the other for residents and management, which have campaigned for dietary improvements; suggested and participated in a variety of outings to local venues; met with government inspectors to discuss issues of concern to residents and organized and hosted special staff appreciation events.

There are also opportunities outside the home. Organizations where you can stretch your imagination, enjoy a variety of stimulating activities and, best of all, know that you are still “you.” Still engaged, still involved, still contributing! One of my fellow residents, who is quadriplegic, is volunteering with WheelTrans as a rider-expert. She has also been appointed to the Board of the Ontario Spinal Cord Association.

I have found a special home with OARC - the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils. They have helped me resolve various issues within my LTC home. I write articles for their newsletter and magazine; and am a member of their Resident Expert Advisors and Leaders (REAL) Group, which is comprised of Resident Leaders throughout Ontario. We are involved in issues as varied as food, and care initiatives and government projects. Through OARC, I have served on hiring panels within their organization and added my voice to influence changes. I've participated in consultations and written reports to the Ministry of Long-Term Care. I have attended, and



Jennifer with fellow presenters at the AdvantAge Ontario Convention, April 2026, speaking on food and dining experience in Long-Term Care homes.

even presented at conferences, where I have met many interesting people including LTC managers from across the province, LTC suppliers and government representatives, including Ministers and Deputy Ministers.



Still engaged, still involved, still contributing!

None of this would have happened if I hadn't been living in LTC. I realize that what I've written about here may not resonate with you. What I'm hoping though, is that it may shine a little light on a world of possibilities that you may have thought was closed to you. It isn't. Find out for yourself. OARC would be a great place to start.

Our Best Residents' Council Week Yet!



By: Jolenne Glenn
OARC Resident Leader



Residents' Council Week is about more than recognition—it's about reminding everyone that this is our home.

The first few years of Residents' Council Week seemed to come and go without much fanfare. Activities were planned, of course, but the week didn't quite have the spark I felt it deserved. Last year, however, everything changed for me. As a newly elected Residents' Council President, I was determined to bring new energy to the celebration—something that would not only highlight our Council but also inspire others to get involved in the life of our home at St. Lawrence Lodge.

I started planning weeks in advance. I wanted something visual, something that would tell our story and show just how active and engaged our residents truly are. So I rolled up my sleeves and began creating display boards filled with photo

collages—capturing moments from our meetings, outings, and everyday life. With the help of resources from OARC, I also included information about what Residents' Council does and why it matters.

Seeing it all come together was incredibly rewarding. Our front lobby was transformed into a vibrant space that caught everyone's attention—residents, staff, and visitors alike. People stopped, looked, asked questions, and most importantly, connected. It gave us a chance to showcase our voices and our contributions in a very real way.

Residents' Council Week is about more than recognition—it's about reminding everyone that this is our home. Our voices matter, and when we work together, we can shape the kind of community we want to live in. I'm proud of what we achieved last year, and **I'm already looking forward to making this year even better.**



2025 Celebration Highlights



1 Express Your Rights!

Contest Submissions

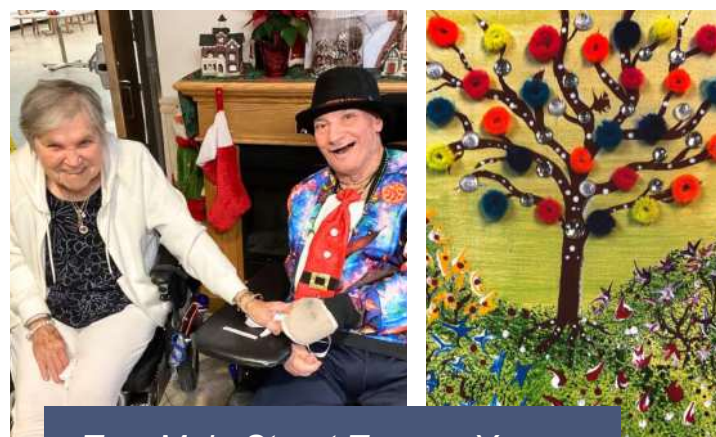
Our 2025 contest encouraged residents to express their Residents' Bill of Rights using artistic mediums of their choosing, and the 50+ submissions we received were nothing short of powerful.



2 Greetings and Recognition

Minister of Long-Term Care

The Honourable Natalia Kusendova-Bashta was a special guest at our RC Week Webinar – offering messages of encouragement and recognition of Residents' Councils across Ontario.



*Top: Main Street Terrace, Yee Hong Ho Lai Oi Wan Centre
Bottom Left: King Nursing Home
Bottom Right: Dearness Home*

3 Live Concert

Our Festive Friday Event

Once again, our week of celebration was concluded with a live concert featuring the joyful vocals of Deidrey Francois and the announcement of the winners of our contest draw.

Ready, Set, Engage!

This year's 2026 Residents' Council week will launch September 14-20. **Save the date!**

Building Trust and Inspiring Hope

Celebrating the 2025 Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award Recipient

March 26, 2025 was a special day for the residents at Algonquin Nursing home, in Mattawa, Ontario. Members of the town's Recreation Department, the Home's Recreation team, and the high school hockey program came together to support residents for a fun day on the ice. The smiles on residents' faces were infectious. **"I never imagined I'd be on the ice again. It made me feel young,"** one resident shared.

The event highlighted the power of intergenerational connection and captured the true spirit of an initiative of the home that showcases what collaboration between Residents' Councils, staff, families and community

partners could accomplish. "The joy in that arena is something we'll carry with us for a long time," Reflected one team member.

The Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award (SCALA for short) – was created in memory of the late Sharron Cooke, a dynamic and inspiring Resident Leader from Newmarket, Ontario. Before her passing, Sharron worked with the OARC team to envision an annual award that recognizes a LTC home team, comprised of residents and team members, that are helping to bring about positive culture change. In 2025, during the Residents' Council Week celebrations, the award was presented to Algonquin Nursing Home. The home was selected for several reasons; ultimately, their submission told a story of home transformation, evidenced by collaboration and meaningful action.



“

The joy in that arena is something we'll carry with us for a long time.



Following the COVID-19 pandemic, residents expressed a strong desire to spend more time out in the community. During the pandemic, with extended isolation and limitations to their freedom, residents felt disconnected. Many shared, through the home's Resident Satisfaction Survey and Residents' Council, that they had lost a sense of belonging.

In response, the Residents' Council partnered with staff to design a series of community outings. Residents were actively involved in identifying meaningful activities – such as attending seniors' club dances or visiting parks – and staff supported by arranging transportation, ensuring accessibility, and prioritizing safety.

“For so long we felt like the world forgot about us. Going back out into the community made me feel alive again—like I belong,” one resident shared.

This initiative has had a profound impact on building trust and inspiring hope.

By listening to and responding with meaningful action, staff showed residents that their voices mattered and choices were respected—and that their Council was effective and valued.



It feels good to be heard. We said what mattered to us, and it actually happened.

– Resident

The collaboration, relationship-building, compassion, and respect for residents' voices, were all qualities and outcomes of this initiative that embodied the spirit of the SCALA award. The initiative enriched daily life and restored a vital sense of belonging for residents. OARC was proud to bestow the 2025 SCALA award to this inspiring LTC home and partnership initiative. Congratulations Algonquin Nursing Home!

SCALA

Honourable Mentions

Staff Orientation By Residents - Huron Lodge, Windsor

Residents' Council leaders developed their own resident-led presentation to inspire and connect with newly hired staff in the home. **“Learning about resident care lays the groundwork, but hearing directly from residents truly brings their experiences to life”** - Staff Development Coordinator

Reading Circle Initiative: Building Bridges with Tanya - West Park Long-Term Care Centre, Toronto

Working closely with the Recreation Team, Resident Leader Tanya helped to develop a new relationship-building and communication initiative, called the Reading Circle. This weekly peer-led storytelling group facilitates open dialogue between residents and team members.

Applications are currently open for the 2026 Sharron Cooke Legacy Award. Visit our website for submission details.

<https://shorturl.at/Vqnr>



Tuckshop Cupboard - Extendicare Iler Lodge, Essex

Responding to a resident-identified need, the President of the Residents' Council, Laura, worked with the LTC home to create a new tuck shop program offering a range of items at accessible price points. As a former retail store manager, Laura used her career experience with maintaining and organizing product inventory and accounting to make the project a sustainable success.

The program is now hosted weekly in conjunction with the home's Lost and Found cart, providing an essential service and facilitating relationships between the residents living in both the long-term care and Retirement Home sides of the community. Monies generated through tuck shop are reinvested into the home through Residents' Council to support programs and BBQ's (pictured above.)

Enhancing the Dining Experience

Quality Improvement at Kensington Health

By: Paula Ashley, Senior Director, Facilities Management, Raquel Farrington, Communications Manager

As part of our ongoing commitment to continuous quality improvement, the team at Kensington Health initiated a Quality Improvement Project (QIP) focused on enhancing the dining experience for the people we serve. This story below captures our collaborative experience selecting and upgrading the dining tables.

Replacement of Dining Tables

The need to replace the current dining tables was evident: tables were breaking, replacement parts were no longer available, and they were unadaptable—residents using large wheelchairs were unable to use them comfortably. We sought to replace these tables with ones that would allow all our residents to fully participate around the dining table.

Consultation Process:

At both Residents' Council and Family Council meetings, a sample table was displayed so residents and families could



physically interact with it. Residents living in Kensington's North and South Tower buildings responded positively. "The new tables are great!" Tom, one of our residents, said when asked his evaluation. **"They work really well for people with different physical needs."**

Residents were encouraged to ask questions and explore the benefits of the new tables. While the removal of tablecloths initially created some uncertainty, bamboo placemats were positively received as an alternative.

For the laminate finish selection, the project team pre-selected three options. Kensington's Food and Nutrition Manager then met with residents and team members in each dining room to vote on their preferred finish. A spreadsheet was created to track preferences, and the majority choice was selected.

Resident Leader Virginia Parraga expressed appreciation for being proactively engaged throughout the planning and consultation process. **"We all had a say, it was great!"**

With new dining tables allowing equitable enjoyment of dining spaces, residents can now enjoy a dining experience that centers their choices and needs.

Behind Every Door

Personal Journeys and the Power of Person-Centred Care

By: Hannah Cruz, Barbara Michalik, Danielle Herrington and Sonia Jemmott

The Rekai Centres, comprising both Wellesley Central Place and Sherbourne Place, embarked on a journey to implement the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) Person-and Family-Centred Care Best Practice Guideline, marking a pivotal shift in culture for the organization. The need for change was clear: care practices were task-oriented which became a barrier when staff tried building therapeutic relationship with the residents. These challenges prompted our interdisciplinary team to adopt a more holistic, respectful and inclusive approach to care.

A key initiative was the introduction of the Life Story Program. Developed by Barbara Michalik, Executive Director Community, Academic Partnerships and Programs, the program supports person-centred care by enabling nurses, support staff, volunteers and students to engage with residents as

whole individuals. Each Life Story documents the residents' social history, family background, career, education and personal interests, enhancing individualized care. This approach is further integrated into the home's pain and palliative program, where, upon a resident's passing, the framed Life Story is given to the family.

The impact was powerful. Residents felt heard, valued, and proud to see their stories displayed. Staff gained deeper insight into who each resident truly was beyond their medical needs, which led to stronger relationships and more compassionate care.

At The Rekai Centres, Person-and Family-Centred Care is now more than a guideline – it's a daily practice. The Rekai Centres will receive their Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) designation this year and we are looking forward to continuing implementing best practices.





Snip by Snip

Finding Meaning in Connection

By: Alyssa Henzy, Director of Programs, peopleCare AR Goudie

At peopleCare AR Goudie, meaningful moments often unfold in the most natural ways.

During an afternoon in the home's salon, a resident who once styled hair for weddings and worked in a salon had the chance to reconnect with her lifelong passion. Recreation Aide Tess volunteered to be her client, giving her the opportunity to pick up the scissors once again and share her gift.

The moment she began cutting, her confidence returned. Her hands moved with practiced ease, her focus clear and her joy unmistakable. Staff nearby smiled as they watched her pride and excitement fill the room.

Tess later reflected, "It felt like I was witnessing her in her element, expressing her passion in a deeply personal way. As she gave me a new haircut, she was

not only sharing her gift of cutting hair but also offering a gift to me. I felt happy, cared for, and truly lucky. For once, she was the one caring for me, rather than the other way around. She appeared dignified and full of excitement, with a clear sense of purpose."

“

It felt like I was witnessing her in her element, expressing her passion in a deeply personal way.

What began as a simple haircut became a powerful reminder of what truly matters in long-term care — meaning, connection, and the enduring value of personhood.

- ✓ Celebrate three successes from today.
- ✓ Take pride in the care you provided.
- ✓ Reflect on today's challenges. Can you

Small Things, Big Impact

CESBA's Long-Term Care
Coffee Chat at Pioneer Manor

By: Amanda White, PSW Champion

CESBA (Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators) recently held a series of Long-Term Care Coffee Chats, an initiative celebrating Personal Support Workers (PSWs). Recently, Amanda, the CESBA PSW champion for Northern Ontario, visited Pioneer Manor to co-host a Coffee Chat alongside members of the home's Residents' Council. The result was meaningful connection, recognition and support for the teams who make every day brighter.

Coffee Chat is centred on residents' and staff voices. They shared stories of the "small things" PSWs do, like humming a resident's favourite song during bath time. The impact is tangible: most PSWs who engaged with the Coffee Chat felt more valued and connected. In the home, that translated into calmer shifts, stronger communication and more meaningful moments with residents.



At Coffee Chat, Amanda and Residents' Council member Tyna Raymond recognized PSWs and the broader health-care team. Staff can access relevant resources, updates on training, wellness supports, and practical self-care tips like quick stretch routines. Amanda brings her Coffee Chat to Pioneer Manor each month, and notes that despite it being one of the larger long-term care homes in Ontario, the staff make it feel cozy and home-like. The positive affirmation poster board she started using showcases teamwork and positivity across the interdisciplinary team, and overflows with inspiring messages about the staff and the residents.



**When caregivers thrive,
residents feel it every day.**

— Coffee Chat attendee

The monthly Coffee Chats are a reminder that connection is a PSW's most powerful tool, and help create the "wow moments" that matter in residents' lives.

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Pressure Ulcer Prevention at Fairmount Home

By: Rebecca McEwen, RN(EC), MSc.,
CHPCN(C), Nurse Practitioner

Fairmount Home is on a journey to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) in partnership with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO). We reviewed our Health Quality Ontario performance data with our Residents' Council and identified that our incidence of pressure injuries was significantly higher than the provincial average.

A pressure injury, also known as a bedsore, is a wound that occurs because sustained pressure reduces blood flow, causing the tissue to break down. Pressure injuries increase resident's risk for infection, pain and depression.

By implementing recommendations from the RNAO's "Pressure injury management: Risk assessment, prevention and treatment" Best Practice Guideline, we are striving to avoid unnecessary suffering for all residents.

Pressure injury prevention is a collaborative effort including our residents and interprofessional team. In July 2024,

our monthly pressure injury incidence was 6%. Our Residents' Council strongly supported a quality improvement initiative to reduce the pressure injury incidence at Fairmount Home.

Learning from other long term care homes and by engaging residents, the following practice changes occurred:

- ▷ Standardization of the pressure injury risk assessments, and integration into each resident's electronic medical record.
- ▷ Development of pressure relieving protocols dependent on the pressure injury risk score.
- ▷ Reconciling resident care plans based on pressure injury risk and resident preferences.

Together, we have reduced our residents' monthly pressure injury incidence to 2%. This enhanced quality of care is improving the lived experiences of our residents. If residents at your home are interested in learning about programs and quality improvements related to skin and wound care, consider inviting your Director of Care to a future Residents' Council meeting. Exploring solutions with residents leads to better outcomes and deeper understanding for everyone involved.

Residents' Council Leadership in Action

Residents Contributing to Staff Orientation at Huron Lodge

By: Andrew Francescone, Social Worker and
Thomas Findlay, Resident Leader

After attending the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils (OARC) webinar, Ask A Resident First – Resident Engagement in Long-Term Care Home Operations and Decision-Making, members of the Huron Lodge Residents' Council were inspired to explore new ways to increase resident involvement—particularly in human resources.

One member, Thomas Findlay, posed a simple yet powerful question: “If staff are going to support us, why not get to know who they are supporting?”

Since February 2025, Thomas has been a regular speaker at staff orientation sessions, welcoming new staff to the home.

Thomas emphasizes that for residents, this is not just a workplace—it's their home. This perspective, he explains, is essential to delivering compassionate, person-centered care.

As noticed by our Manager of Quality Improvement and Special Projects, “When Thomas is speaking, every single new staff is engaged. The dynamic not only enriches the orientation experience but also lays the foundation for a positive, supportive work environment.”



It's easy to feel alone in a building full of people.

– Thomas Findlay



Throughout his presentation, he highlights the importance of recognizing each resident's individuality as a tool to assist with feelings of loneliness. He shares how events like the home's annual classic car show help connect with his—and others'—passions.

Thomas also brings forward feedback gathered from Residents' Council meetings and from other residents in the home. He reminds staff of small but impactful practices—like knocking before entering a room and doing things with residents, not just for them. He introduces new hires to the Residents' Bill of Rights, and leads them through reflection exercises to deepen their understanding of resident-centered care.

According to the Staff Development Coordinator at Huron Lodge, “having Thomas speak at orientation offers a valuable, first-hand perspective. Staff who attend his presentation often continue to greet him by name in the hallways, reflecting the lasting impression he makes. **“It’s clear that welcoming each new group brings a sense of purpose and joy to Thomas.”**

Thomas hopes his involvement will inspire other residents and Administrators to create similar opportunities for engagement in long-term care homes across the province. His leadership is a shining example of how resident voices can shape more empathetic, respectful, and connected care environments.



Membership

Join us in building a sector where resident influence continues to grow!

Your annual OARC membership reflects a shared commitment to amplifying resident voices and lived experience. Member feedback plays a vital role in advancing OARC's advocacy, learning, and sector leadership.

We invite you to become a member, or renew your membership for the 2026-2027 year.

Learn more at www.ontarc.com

Contest Alert!



Seek and find! Hidden somewhere in this issue are 6 blue hearts.

Find them all and email **Stephanie Buosi** with your answers at sbuosi@ontarc.com for your chance to win a gift card for your Residents' Council.

Contest ends July 31, 2026

Dignity, Choice, and Voice

A Resident-Led Approach to Palliative Care through Best Practices

By: Ashley Guay, MAG, CTRS, R/TRO, and
Wanda Pearce, Resident Leader

At Humber Meadows Long-Term Care Home, our residents are not simply recipients of care, they are active partners in shaping it. As we continue our journey to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) in partnership with the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO), resident voices remain at the center of every decision we make.

While evidence-based guidelines form the foundation of quality care, their true impact is realized only when informed by the lived experiences of those we serve. From falls prevention to pain management, residents provide insights that no research alone could capture, ensuring care is both clinically strong and deeply human.

This partnership is especially evident in palliative and end-of-life care. Residents have courageously shared their wishes and experiences, shaping compassionate approaches that support individuals and families during life's most difficult moments. **One key outcome is the evolution of Code Butterfly, a process that honours residents after they pass.** With resident input, it now includes staff, residents, and visitors, with overhead announcements inviting the community to pause and reflect together.



Above: Ashley and Wanda with the butterfly blanket used for Code Butterfly, the palliative care cart and family cot.

Right: Wanda being interviewed for a segment played at the BPSO Launch.



Residents have also directly influenced improvements in palliative care resources, including the purchase of cots to support family presence and enhancements to palliative care carts to ensure comfort and accessibility at the bedside.

Our Residents' Council has further strengthened this culture of compassion by creating condolence cards signed by peers, then sent to families. This commitment was recognized when Ashley Guay, Director of Resident Programs, and Wanda were invited to speak on a panel at a Registered Nurses Association of Ontario BPSO launch event. This first of its kind invitation marked the inclusion of a resident voice in this provincial forum, highlighting Humber Meadows' collaborative approach to care.



While it may be uncomfortable at first, there is no voice more important in shaping palliative care than the residents. We want to be included.

— Wanda Pearce

At Humber Meadows, our BPSO journey is not about designation. It is a reminder that residents are our purpose, and their voices need to be included.



Staying InForumed

Join the members of OARC's REAL group and connect with residents across Ontario!



For me the Forum was wonderful to get information from the other homes. Listening to other residents talk about what they like and don't like. Maybe try some of their ideas for your home.

— Wanda Jensch

Want to connect with amazing people? We've got the perfect way to do it! Join a group of residents who dive into a variety of fascinating topics and discover what life is like in different homes.

— Walter Loritz



Join the Resident Forum via Zoom for 1 hour EVERY Thursday at 2pm ... all residents are welcomed!

— Ann Donaldson

YOUR RIGHTS, YOUR LANGUAGE

Every person living in long-term care is afforded 29 rights embedded in our provincial legislation.

Did you know the OARC has translated the Residents' Bill of Rights in over 35 languages?



New Translations for 2026

- ASL & LSQ
- Plains Cree
- Eastern Ojibwe
- Armenian
- Oji-Cree
- Punjabi
- Mohawk
- Latvian



**ACCESS OARC'S BILL OF
RIGHTS LANGUAGE BANK**

<https://shorturl.at/yy1at>

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