May 1, 2020

Letter to the Editor
Toronto Star
Via email: lettertoed@thestar.ca

Re: **A ban on window visits at long-term-care homes? One Ottawa bureaucrat's monstrous decree adds insult to injury – Rosie DiManno's, April 30**

Therapeutic Recreation professionals are often the staff who are facilitating window visits in LTC. They, more than anyone, understand the need for social connections during this pandemic. They are the staff who are coordinating virtual visits, doing 1:1 visits with residents and running small group programs (in homes where they are still allowed). They understand how visits from families help fight the three scourges of long-term care: loneliness, isolation and depression. They understand that families want to provide comfort and love with a smile and kind words through a window.

Unfortunately, window visits can be challenging in many care homes. Not every care home has enough staff to coordinate the visits on top of coordinating virtual visits, mealtimes, and personal care. Not every family respects the physical distancing requirements, nor does every family respect time limits allowing other families who want to visit too. When families show up without booking a visit, it causes extra strain on already over-burdened staff. Not every home is built to accommodate window visits. Some family members speak through open windows, increasing the risk of transmission. Finally, while window visits can help to reassure residents they've not been forgotten and brings comfort to their families that their loved one is doing okay, these visits can sometimes cause a devastating emotional toll on residents who may become confused over why they cannot be with their family or reach out and touch their loved ones.

Not all of this is true for every care home, but it is the case for many.

There are always different perspectives to every situation. It is important to understand reasons why decisions are made before sounding off and calling them ridiculous.

Rozalyn Werner-Arcé
Executive Director