

Ontario Health Coalition

MEDIA
RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Citing Unacceptable Care Standards Groups Launch Nursing Homes & Homecare Campaign

Toronto — In a press conference this morning, a group representing residents and care workers expressed concerns that the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care does not intend to reinstate nursing home care standards and access to homecare that were removed by the former Conservative government. The group will take questions about access and care levels to the road, conducting consultations in public forums in at least ten communities across Ontario.

The campaign is timely as the Ministry is preparing to release its policy proposals for long term care promised after the media expose of conditions in facilities. In addition, a successful challenge to homecare cut-offs and a provincial review of the Community Care Access Centre in Ottawa throw into question government policy of cuts to and privatization in homecare.

"We believe that the government will be announcing some improvements to facility care but they are stalling on some critical reforms such as minimum staffing ratios. Refusing regulated standards to ensure residents get enough care is unjustifiable when the for-profit homes are reporting record profits", stated Ethel Meade, Ontario Health Coalition co chair. "We want to gather and record the experiences of residents, their families and care workers across Ontario so that we can present the evidence to this government and discuss with those most affected what we should do next."

"Homecare for people who need homemaking services is almost extinct in Ontario", noted Bea Levis of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations. "Literally tens of thousands have been dropped from homemaking case lists with the shifting of budgets to acute care in the home. The government's policy planning must include access to long term care in the home so seniors have the option to age in place. "

"Nurses and care workers believe Ontario's long-term care system - including nursing homes and home care - is in crisis because of understaffing and underfunding," said Linda Haslam-Stroud, President of the Ontario Nurses' Association. "There is a complete lack of transparency and accountability by the government and by nursing homes. There is no process in place to seek input from nurses and care workers, nor to protect staff who speak out," said Haslam-Stroud.

From the submissions and reports received at the forums, the coalition will release a report on the state of long term care in Ontario. The forums, sponsored by the Ontario Health Coalition, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations, Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities, the United Senior Citizens of Ontario and health care unions are planned for the following communities:

North Bay, Tues April 20, 4-6 pm, Elk's Lodge, 325 Elks' Lane

Thunder Bay, Tues Apr 27, 7-9 pm, 55+ Centre, Multipurpose Room, 700 River Street

Sudbury, Tues May 4, 4-6pm, All People's United Church, corner of Jean and Antwerp Streets

Sarnia, Wed May 12, 4-6 pm, Our Lady of Mercy Church, 390 Christina Street North

Peterborough, Thurs May 6, 4-6pm, Peterborough Library, 345 Aylmer North (Uptown)

Windsor, Mon May 10, 7-9pm, Windsor Public Library, 850 Oullette Avenue

Ottawa, Mon May 17, 4-6 pm to be confirmed (call Abe Rosenfeld 613 244-2817) Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, 221 Nelson

St. Catherines, Mon May 17, 4-6 pm, Howard Johnson on Lake Street

Orillia, Tues May 18, 4-6 pm, City Hall, Council Chambers, 50 Andrew Street South

Toronto, Wed May 19, 4-6 pm, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street (north of Bloor).

LTC/Home Care Forums

Questions you may want to consider for your submission to the forum:

1. Have inspections resulted in improved conditions in facilities? How can we ensure that this is the case?
2. Have there been cuts to staffing hours per resident or to numbers of staff in your local facilities? What has this meant for staff & residents?
3. What access to homecare issues exist in your community?
4. How does the current *resident classification system* (used to assess the amount of care and funding a resident requires) work for you/your clients/your family member?
5. What improvements do you want to see in long term care facilities and homecare?
6. What are the major problems for you as a resident, client, advocate, family member or staff person?
7. Do you support the key concerns listed in the backgrounders provided?
8. What has the *competitive bidding system*, which forced non-profits such as the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Red Cross to compete with for-profit corporations for contracts in homecare, meant to you as a care provider/client/advocate?
9. Do you have problems accessing the information you need or want from long term care facilities or homecare agencies (including Community Care Access Centres)?
10. What are the best things you see happening in long term care facilities and homecare?

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