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Attn: Assignment Editor

For Immediate Release

Provincial Election Discussion Should be About Rebuilding Public Hospitals & Long-Term Care Not “Efficiencies” or “Lean” or Code Words for Cuts: Health Coalition Calls for Concrete Commitments to Redress the Crisis in Access to Care

Toronto – After touring Ontario in recent weeks, Health Coalition spokeswoman Natalie Mehra returned to Toronto this morning at a press conference outside the Emergency Department at Mount Sinai Hospital to talk about the crisis in access to health care. Noting that the Coalition’s mandate is to protect public health care in the public interest, she said that the group has chosen its words carefully and has not used the word “crisis” since the 1990s until recently when the overcrowding situation in Ontario’s hospitals truly reached crisis proportions.

The coalition released its platform for the election in Toronto this morning. Called “Time to Rebuild” the coalition has highlighted two key “asks” for all political parties leading into June 7th’s provincial election to fix the crisis:

- An immediate and significant infusion of funding is needed for Ontario’s hospitals which are funded at the lowest rate of any province in Canada by every measure and which have the fewest funded beds remaining after 40-years of downsizing. The coalition is asking for 5.3% per year, based on the best evidence available (2.2% inflation, 1% population growth, 1% aging, 1.1% increased utilization) and a commitment to get that money directly to care, not executive salaries and administrative functions that do not support increasing care levels.
- A commitment to open 30,000 new long-term care spaces as quickly as possible to address the wait list of 34,000 (according to the most recent government of Ontario figures from December) people, mostly elderly, often with dementia and complex care needs that are too heavy for their families to provide. Within long-term care homes, care levels need to improve to meet the increasing complexity. People are suffering for months or even years waiting for long-term care placement.

The coalition will measure each of the parties’ commitments throughout the election campaign against these priority “asks”. In addition, there are recommendations for home care reform; support for community health centres that promote equity in access to needed care and primary care reform; a plan to build new hospitals publicly, reform Infrastructure Ontario and save billions that are currently wasted on P3 privatization; streamlining will rid Ontarians of top-heavy administration and get money more directly to care; democratization of our public hospitals; a roll-back and re-integration of privatized outpatient services and labs, and other public interest reforms.

Health care is polling at the top of the public agenda this election and the Health Coalition is working to ensure that the political parties make commitments that will effect real policy change. “We are here among world-class hospitals in Ontario that simply cannot provide even a safe level of care because of decades of downsizing,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director. “The discussion has to change. This is not a time to be talking about “lean” or “efficiencies” or “transformation” or any other code words for cuts and privatization. All the political parties to make real commitments to fix the crisis that we are seeing in our hospitals and in access to seniors’ care in nursing homes. That means a multi-year commitment to significantly improved funding and restoration of services. Its time now to rebuild.”

For more information: Dana Boettger, Communications Manager (416) 441-2502 (office) or Natalie Mehra, Executive Director (416) 230-6402 (cell).