

# Ontario Health Coalition

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Attn: Assignment Editor

## Home Care Panel Report Missing Core Principles of Public Medicare: Coalition Warns of “Deep Privatization”

Toronto – The Ontario Ministry of Health’s “expert” panel on home care released its recommendations today for home care reform. The recommendations caused deep concern among public health care advocates in the Ontario Health Coalition because they do not include any clear right to access any level of home care services for people in need, and they propose a system of contracting for services that will result in deep privatization.

The expert panel acknowledged the current problems of poor and inequitable access to home care, people suffering without needed care. However, their recommendations fall far short of ensuring access to needed care, and in some cases their recommendations would, if implemented, make things worse.

“It appears that the Ministry’s panel capitulated to the lobby of the provider companies,” noted Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “They wanted the money devolved to them without the CCACs’ oversight.”

In the recommendations of the Ministry’s panel, the LHINs would become the contractor and the provider companies (the majority of which are for-profit) would become the “lead agency”, providing services and subcontracting home care out to other companies. CCACs could bid against the companies to try to win contracts to become the “lead agency” in each area.

“The model proposed by the panel is a model of deep privatization,” added Ms. Mehra. “The functions of the CCACs would be contracted out to private companies, that operate in private interests, not the public interest. Many people have raised serious concerns about conflicts-of-interest as the system is now, with companies trying to sell extra hours of care to clients and retirement homes receiving publicly-funded home care. Under this proposal it would be much worse with private companies that would control home care for entire regions.”

The Health Coalition released a report earlier this week calling for a principled approach to home care reform. In our recommendations we stated that the right to access care is a top priority. Hospitals are not allowed to deny care, but patients moved out of hospitals quicker and sicker are denied care in home care all the time. The coalition has noted that this is an erosion of the scope of public Medicare and a clear right to access publicly covered home care needs to be established.

Instead, the Ministry’s panel sidesteps the issue of what should be covered and simply says that a basket of services should be determined and that families needing home care should be clearly told what care they can expect. The recommendations include a “charter” for home care clients that does not actually contain any right to receive any level of care.

“While it is important that people are told clearly and honestly what care they can expect, more importantly, people need to be able to access the level care they need to get healthy or live independently,” concluded Ms. Mehra. “The panel did not make any proposals that would ensure the right to access care, the obligation to provide resources to meet community need, or any other core principles that should guide our public health system reflecting the values of our communities and province.”

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