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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Inquiry Should Look into All Recent Homicides, Systemic Issues in Long-Term Care: Health Coalition

Toronto – The Ontario Health Coalition is advocating for the public inquiry that the Ontario government has called as a result of the murders in long-term care homes in Woodstock and London be broad enough to cover the systemic issues that have contributed to a context in Ontario’s long-term care homes in which there have been at least 25 homicides in the last four years.

“The media attention to the recent tragedy of the murders in LTC is right and just, but at the same time we want to remind Ontario’s government that there have been more than two dozen homicides due to resident-on-resident violence in long-term care homes,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “Most of the recommendations from coroner’s juries, expert panels and the provincial auditor that would have addressed some of the key systemic issues that contributed to those deaths have, to date, not been implemented.”

There are very serious issues that on an ongoing basis create an unsafe environment in long-term care homes and there is a compelling public interest in addressing these. The priority complaint of staff and consumer groups in long-term care is that the homes are severely understaffed, while the acuity (complexity of the care needs of residents) is increasing with population aging and the closure of thousands of hospital beds, including psychogeriatric cuts. The evidence shows that Ontario’s long-term care homes have care levels that do not meet safety standards. The high-acuity and chronic under-staffing in the homes compromises safety of residents and staff alike.

“We believe that the announced public inquiry should go beyond the current case and be expanded to include the systemic issues in the long-term care sector that have contributed to conditions in which there have been more than twenty-five homicides in addition to the most recent murders,” said Ms. Mehra.

“Our hearts go out to the families and staff impacted by the Wettlaufer murders and all of the families of those impacted by the other homicides in long-term care,” she added. “All the families have the right to a fulsome investigation of the issues. But this should not preclude immediate action. Most importantly, we need urgent action to improve the levels of hands-on care in the homes.”

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