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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

City of Toronto Proposed Divestment of Public Long-Term Care Homes Affecting More than 2,000 Residents: New Report

Toronto – The University of Toronto Health Policy course, in collaboration with the Ontario Health Coalition, collected research regarding the privatization of LTC homes in a report released today. The students reviewed the body of research from across Canada and the United States and found that privatization of the ownership of long-term care homes has a significant impact on quality of care.

In 2011, the City of Toronto commissioned the consulting group KPMG to conduct a “core services review” to identify cost cutbacks. One of KPMG’s recommendations is that the City of Toronto could divest their ownership of long-term care (LTC) homes from ten homes to the provincially mandated minimum of one per municipality. The KPMG report proposes various options, including sale of these nine homes to private owners. This issue is being considered by a City committee this spring and will be significant in the lead-into the 2013 budget.

"The University of Toronto students reviewed all the research and found that quality is better in public, non-profit long-term care homes rather than in for-profit homes," said Natalie Mehra, director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "This is a crucial issue, impacting City of Toronto owned long-term care homes that house more than 2,000 elderly Torontonians and we are hoping that Toronto city councillors take note and vote to maintain higher quality and public ownership of these homes."

"The privatization of Toronto’s long-term care homes could have potentially devastating effects on both current and future residents and their families," said Nick Green, one of the students from the University of Toronto’s Health Policy class.

Dan Buchanan, the Director of Financial Policy from the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors notes, "Within the 19,000 person wait list there is a decided preference for not-for-profit long-term care homes in Toronto" and illustrated this with Ministry waitlist data at both the LHIN and provincial levels. Buchanan also touched on the features of non-profit homes such as high levels of volunteer participation, and close integration with the community and their effect on general health and social programming.

The report reviews the existing body of research on LTC ownership. Key findings include:

- For-profit homes have higher rates of preventable adverse outcomes, including bed sores (pressure ulcers), dehydration, pneumonia, falls and fractures.
- For-profit LTC homes are more likely to engage in inappropriate use of restraints or psychoactive drugs, and over-usage of catheterization or tube feeding.
- For-profit homes provide less staffing and fewer hours of care for resident. Level of care is directly affected by the availability of staffing, and therefore the decreased staffing in for-profit homes in comparison to the non-profit sector leads to lower level of care satisfaction and poorer outcomes.

For more information: Ontario Health Coalition 416-441-2502 (office).