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**Attn: Assignment Editor**

**For Immediate Release**

## **Health Coalition Responds to Wettlaufer Inquiry Announcement**

Toronto – The Ontario government appointed Justice Eileen Gillese from the Ontario Court of Appeal to head a Public Inquiry into the murders of eight long-term care residents by Elizabeth Wettlaufer. The Ontario Health Coalition responded by raising concerns about the duration and the narrow mandate of the inquiry, noting that in addition to the tragic murders committed by Ms. Wettlaufer there have been at least an additional 25 homicides in Ontario’s long-term care homes in the last four years. These are resident-on-resident homicides and they point to wider systemic issues that have resulted in an unacceptable level of violence in long-term care.

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.

The coalition also raised concerns about the Inquiry’s timelines. The government’s mandate for the Inquiry gives it 2-years to conduct its work, pushing the final report and recommendations until well after the next election and media interest has died down. This is too long. It means that recommendations will not be forged and acted upon for years. The families who have lost loved ones as a result of the Wettlaufer murders deserve to have answers to their questions and actions more quickly.

“We will continue to push for Justice Gillese to consider 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 Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

“Our hearts go out to the families and staff impacted by the Wettlaufer murders and all of the families of those impacted by the additional 25 or more homicides in long-term care in the last four years,” 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 daily hands-on care for residents in the homes now.”