

June 21, 2019

For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

## **Ontario Health Coalition Briefing Note on Ontario Cabinet Shuffle: Deep Concerns about Ideological Positions of New Minister of Long-Term Care & Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions**

Toronto - In his press conference announcing the cabinet shuffle, Premier Doug Ford claimed that more than 80 percent of his platform had been implemented. The Health Coalition notes that nothing could be further than the truth when it comes to health care. The Coalition also raised concerns about the pro-privatization, anti-public health care stance of Mr. Ford's long-term care appointee and the ideological/religious position of his mental health appointee.

Ford made three core election commitments for health care: an end to “hallway medicine” and hospital overcrowding; improved mental health care; improved access to long-term care with the expansion of long-term care (nursing home) beds. The Ontario Health Coalition notes that the Ford government has reneged on two of those promises and has failed to act on the third.

- Hallway Medicine: Despite the fact that Ontario's hospitals have been downsized almost without respite for thirty years and Ontario now has the fewest of any province, by far, in Mr. Ford's recent budget, hospital funding has been set at less than the rate of inflation. This means real dollar cuts to hospitals. Hospital service cuts are being announced across the province virtually every day. The Ontario Health Coalition is tracking those cuts along with all other health care cuts by the Ford government here <https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/mounting-health-care-cuts/>.
- The Ford government has let surge funding run out, meaning surge beds have been closed again and hospital cuts are underway.
- Mental Health: Last summer Mr. Ford cut the 2018 budget's planned increase to mental health funding by more than \$330 million per year.
- Long-Term Care: The Ford government has included in its numbers of new long-term care beds 1,000 beds announced and tendered by former Liberal government. Critical shortages of staff mean there is no capacity to open the beds. The Health Coalition has not been able to find any evidence that any new long-term care beds have been built or opened.

New Cabinet Appointees:

Minister of Long-Term Care Merrilee Fullerton has been a long-time advocate of a two-tiered privatised health care system which Fullerton [refers](#) to as a “hybrid system” of care. Fullerton has publicly [campaigned](#) to revise the Canada Health Act to allow for private health care delivery. Fullerton gave an [interview](#) in the U.S. advocating that the U.S. not adopt Canada's single-tier public health care model.

Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Michael Tibollo has [listed](#) himself as Chair and Volunteer Instructor at Caritas School of Life. Caritas is a [religious affiliated](#) addiction treatment facility that [claims](#) that harm reduction strategies (such as safe needle exchange programs) and treatment of addictions with methadone are “inhumane and should be avoided”. Caritas also [states](#) that “addiction is not a medical condition, but rather an acquired way of life”.