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## **Health Coalition Calls on Ford Government to Stop For-Profit Long-Term Care Chain Companies from Banning Essential Caregivers: COVID-19**

Toronto/Sudbury – The Ontario Health Coalition has been hearing from family members of loved ones in long-term care homes who are being stopped from getting into the homes to provide support and care for their loved ones. This is happening in a range of long-term care homes across Ontario, and the Coalition is hearing it much more frequently from families with loved ones in for-profit homes. In one particularly egregious example, Jarlette, a for-profit chain with 14 long-term care homes across the province, has suspended all access for essential caregivers except compassionate and end-of-life care.

Under Directive #3 Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams, has issued directions regarding visitors/essential caregivers. All LTC homes have to have a policy that is compliant with the Directives.

The Minister of LTC's COVID-19 Visiting Policy, December 26, is to assist LTC homes with implementing Directive #3. In it, it is clear that essential caregivers are designated by the resident or their substitute decision-maker. Each resident can have up to two essential caregivers. In areas of high COVID prevalence or in homes with COVID-19 outbreaks, the homes can limit essential caregivers to one at a time. Essential caregivers must follow the homes' policies for infection control and safety, including testing, PPE and training. But LTC homes cannot simply ban all essential caregivers. (Note: Visitors, who are not essential caregivers, can be stopped in homes in outbreak or in areas with high COVID prevalence.)

"At this difficult time, it is more important than ever that residents have access to essential caregivers for assistance and support," said Jane Meadus LL.B Laywer and Institutional Advocate at the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. "Under the Resident's Bill of Rights in the LTC Homes Act it is unlawful for homes to interfere with this right."

"While we understand the fear of the spread of the U.K. variant, the fact is that long-term care homes can set a policy of requiring and providing a stronger level of protection and PPE for essential caregivers," said Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "We all know the suffering and death of residents resulting from isolation and inadequate care. Locking out all essential caregivers is not a solution; it causes harm, and in some cases, irreparable harm. The Ford government must intervene."

"The Elizabeth Centre Friends and Family Council sent a letter to Jarlette Health Services regarding the order to suspend all essential family caregivers, stating that we are concerned with it because of the effect it will have on the emotional well-being of our loved ones," said Roma Smith, Chair of the Elizabeth Centre Friends and Family Council and member of the Ontario Health Coalition Long-Term Care Committee. During the first wave of this pandemic we saw the negative impact of social isolation on our loved ones. We asked Jarlette to reconsider their decision."

The OHC in partnership with lawyers from the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly held a video briefing and has provided all the resources for families with questions about access to their loved ones in long-term care. It is available [here](#).