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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Health Coalition Extremely Concerned About LHIN Restructuring Rumours

Following the story that broke on CBC news this morning revealing rumours that Ontario's fourteen local health integration networks (LHINs) will be restructured into five the Ontario Health Coalition has raised questions about the Ford government's intentions regarding this restructuring rumour. The Coalition had heard similar rumours last week.

"When Tim Hudak was PC party leader their plan was to shut down the LHINs entirely. Today the rumoured plans is to keep the LHINs but make the regions ginormous. The question is what part of the existing LHINs does Ford intend to keep," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. The LHINs were established as restructuring entities pushing amalgamations and mergers. If this continues, only on the massive scale rumoured, it will be devastating to local hospital services and other local health care services.

The Ontario Health Coalition has spent the last decade advocating to protect local hospitals from centralization of their services, cuts and closures, as well as local community health services. Under the LHIN legislation LHINs are required to find restructuring opportunities, mergers, and amalgamations in perpetuity this is in the Coalition's view costly and damaging for patients' local access to health care.

Under the former liberal government home care was moved into the LHINs further complicating matters. There are thousands of care coordinators, case managers, health professions, and care workers provide direct home care services from the LHINs. We strongly object to any plan to privatize all of the remaining public home care services warned Ms. Mehra "this plan would further fragment and worsen home care, having the private companies themselves take over all of home care is akin to having the fox guard the chicken coop. It is unacceptable and we will fight it with all our strength if it comes to that."

The Health Coalition notes there has been no public consultation on these major changes and calls on the government to make policy decisions with proper public consultation and meaningful input.