

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Attn: Assignment Editor

Expert Report Calls for Major Changes in Ontario Home Care

TORONTO – A new independent report on Ontario’s home care sector calling for urgent reform was released today.

The report, entitled *Home Care: Change We Need*, is authored by:

- Patricia Baranek, PhD, health services research and policy consultant who has written on home care reform.
- Carol Kushner, health policy author and consultant who was an advisor to the Senior Citizens’ Consumer Alliance for Long Term Care Reform which held an extensive consultation process in 1992.
- Marion Dewar was the former mayor of Ottawa and a former MP. Marion died very suddenly in September as the authors were beginning work on the final version of the report. It is dedicated to her memory.

The report is a non-partisan independent review of the current research and input received through 78 presentations and 69 written submissions in five public hearings held across Ontario held in June 2008. Hearings were held in Toronto, Sarnia, Peterborough, Ottawa and Thunder Bay. Submissions were provided by clients, family caregivers, concerned citizens, public interest groups, front line home care workers, labour organizations, and home care provider agencies.

“Our main finding is that change is urgently needed,” said co-author Carol Kushner. “The home care system described at the public hearings process revealed worried and even frightened clients, exasperated citizen and public interest groups, demoralized workers and a seriously destabilized provider community. We need to protect quality and continuity of care and make sure that home care is a sector capable of attracting and retaining its workforce.”

Ontario is the only province in Canada with a full competitive bidding system for home care and even in Ontario, no other part of the health system uses it.

“What we heard and our review of the research literature raises questions about the appropriateness of this model, particularly given the strategic role home care plays in our system,” added co-author Pat Baranek, PhD.

“I want to thank the expert panelists for their hard work and insight. Home care is a vital service for thousands of Ontario families and a vital part of Ontario’s health care future – but the system’s not working as well as it should. We need to begin constructive dialogue with workers, patients, agencies and the government to make it work,” said Cathy Carroll of SEIU Canada Local 1.

Report authors made 20 recommendations to reform home care and provide urgently needed change, including:

1. Home care policy should respect client choice in the decision to receive care at home provided the total costs for home care do not exceed costs in a nursing home or hospital. The system needs to ensure that clients are told about their rights to a case review and how to appeal if dissatisfied.
2. CCACs should be re-established as non-profit organizations with their own boards, and be able to hire CEOs and direct care staff.
3. ‘Gag’ orders on staff should be outlawed and whistle-blower protection should be established across the sector.
4. Significant reforms to stabilize the workforce and improve the quality and continuity of care including: wage parity with hospitals and nursing homes; adequate travel reimbursement and benefits, and; elimination of casualization of the workforce. A move to 70% full time work across the sector should be implemented within 3 years.
5. Halt competitive bidding by extending the current moratorium. Establish province-wide quality indicators and set

multi-year targets for improvements.

6. Pilot and evaluate alternative models of homecare.
7. Improve and standardize training of personal support workers, provide tuition assistance and establish a registry.
8. Consider new homecare legislation.

649,244 clients received home care in the fiscal year of 2005/06. In that period homecare workers made almost 26 million visits to their clients, the majority of whom (58%) were over 65 years old.

Report and media backgrounder are available at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

The report was sponsored by the Ontario Health Coalition and SEIU local 1 Canada, but the findings and recommendations are independent and were forged at the discretion of the authors.

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