



November 2, 2020
For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Ford's 4-hour long-term care announcement too late: Need commitment to deal with staffing crisis now

Toronto – While the Ontario Health Coalition is happy that the Ford government has finally adopted the 4-hour minimum care standard as policy, the timeline that they have given is so long that it is meaningless for the people who are suffering and dying in long-term care now, warns the Coalition. The Coalition has been working to win a minimum care standard in long-term care for more than 20 years, since the Harris government removed the existing care standard in the late 1990s. For at least 15 years this has been a priority issue and the Health Coalition has held countless events and activities to pressure consecutive governments to bring it in. Today the Ford government announced that it has adopted the 4-hour target but will not commit to implementing it until 2024/25, four years and a provincial election away.

“Too much of the government’s response to date has been focused on PR at the expense of concrete measures”, said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “There is much more that the Ford government could do right now to save lives and get care levels up, so announcing a care standard four years from now is just not good enough.”

“Ontarians need to know what concrete recruitment and training is going to happen right now to get staff into the homes and to move us toward the four-hour minimum average care level as quickly as possible,” Ms. Mehra went on to say.

For example:

- 4 months ago, at the beginning of June, Quebec’s government launched a recruitment drive backed by the full power of government and funded fully to get 10,000 PSW-equivalent workers, paid them \$21 per hour for training, increased wages to \$26 an hour and is deploying this small army of workers into the homes.
- British Columbia’s government took action 6 months ago to provide full time work and an increased wage of \$21.75 per hour for PSWs in long-term care to stabilize the workforce.
- In contrast, Ontario’s government did nothing substantial in the summer months when there was a lull in COVID-19 cases and should have been planning for the fall. Finally in September, they announced funding and training for 2000 PSWs along with a series of piecemeal funding and training; no big recruitment drive, no full time work, no improvement in wages and working conditions that would attract people to this work. They also renewed the pandemic pay until March, but at \$1 per hour less than it was in the summer. (For a quick summary of the staffing and funding announcements made in September, click [here](#)).

“We are happy that the minimum care standard is finally, belatedly, adopted as policy but we cannot allow this to be the way that this government tries to shut down the legitimate criticism about their inadequate response. We desperately need staff in the homes now. It is in this government’s power to do more. Why will they not do it?” concluded Ms. Mehra.