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## **OHC Responds to Ford Government's PSW Announcement with Incredulity: 373 PSWs for Long-Term Care Nowhere Near What is Needed**

Toronto –Today the Ford government announced funding to train 373 new long-term care PSWs in Lanark and Renfrew, North Bay, Hamilton, Ottawa, the Greater Toronto Area, Kitchener, London and Burlington. This number of PSWs would not be enough to improve care in one middle-sized town, let alone across nine regions encompassing half the population of the province, reported the Ontario Health Coalition. Moreover, the Ford government has still done nothing to improve the wages and working conditions of long-term care staff so that new staff can be retained in this sector, where, even prior to the pandemic, there were [severe shortages](#) and very [serious problems](#) with care levels.

In context, the Ontario Health Coalition has calculated that in order to get to a safe level of care -- a minimum of 4-hours of care per resident per day -- Ontario needs approximately 20,838 full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) including PSWs, RPNs and RNs for existing LTC beds. If the 15,000 new LTC beds are created as has been promised, Ontario would need an additional 12,823 PSWs, RPNs and RNs on top of the 20,838 FTEs for a total of 33,661 full-time equivalent staff. This translates to 44,880 full and part-time staff.

“There is a humanitarian crisis in Ontario’s long-term care homes. Residents are going without proper feeding and hydration, baths, foot care, repositioning, rehabilitation – the very basics of care – let alone not having their psychological, social, and cultural needs met,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director. “We have never, in all of our years advocating in long-term care, seen such a widespread and profound staffing and care crisis. In context, this announcement is so inadequate as to be unconscionable.”

By comparison, Quebec’s government took responsibility for the horrific conditions in its long-term care homes in the spring, reports the Ontario Health Coalition. Eight months ago, on June 1, Quebec’s government launched an initiative to recruit 10,000 PSWs, paid them \$21 per hour for training and increased wages and full-time work. They provided intensive training and got the new staff into the homes in time for the second wave. Unlike Ontario, Quebec had a much better second wave in LTC homes. Ontario, conversely had a much worse [second wave](#). By February 9, the number of residents and staff that had contracted COVID-19 in Ontario’s LTC homes exceeded the first wave by 50%, large outbreaks continue, and the number of deaths has also surpassed the first wave and continues to climb.

In response to intense pressure, the Ford government finally revealed its staffing plan on December 17. The plan promises an average of 4-hours of care per resident per day not until 2024-25, a completely unaccountable timeline, reports the Coalition. Further, the plan is back-end loaded, delaying increases until after the next provincial election. The first 15-minute increment is not scheduled to happen until April 2022. Most long-term care residents will not live to see any real improvement in care if this plan is not improved dramatically.

Moreover, Ontario has lost significant staff in long-term care over the pandemic, reducing care to the lowest levels we have ever seen. By the end of the first wave Ontario had lost approximately 30% of long-term care staff and more staff was lost in the second wave. “It is hard to imagine how this announcement could be less than it is,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director. “It is an attempt to make it look like something is happening when it is not. We are stunned and appalled.”