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For Immediate Release

Attn:

Assignment Editor

## **Wettlaufer Inquiry into Ontario long-term care underlines need for improved care levels not cuts**

Toronto – The Elizabeth Wettlaufer murders were terrible human tragedies and our heartfelt condolences go to the families of the victims, said the Ontario Health Coalition today on the occasion of the release of the report from Ontario's public inquiry into long-term care.

**The Coalition, which has advocated for improved access to care and improved regulated levels of care, released the following briefing note in response to the Inquiry's report:**

### **Briefing Note on Key Issues in Long-term Care + Public Inquiry Recommendations**

"The report from the public inquiry into Ontario's long-term care homes following the Elizabeth Wettlaufer murders highlights the need for systemic responses including improved staffing and care levels. The inquiry focused on nursing and therefore did not make recommendations regarding the full range of daily hands on care staff including personal support workers but its general thrust regarding the rising acuity of the residents and the need for improved staffing to meet those needs should be applied broadly to the daily hands on staff.

The Ontario Health Coalition's member organizations, including the patient/client advocacy groups, family councils, unions, health professionals and doctors have total consensus that the key issue in long-term care is the urgent need for improvement in daily hands on care. That the level of care should be a minimum average of 4-hours per resident per day, based on the evidence of what is needed to meet the acuity (complexity and heaviness) of the care needs of the residents.

"The Inquiry report recommendations were limited to the scope of the Inquiry, but still identified key issues of note that address longstanding problems in long-term care:

- That aging baby boomers are not to blame for increasing long-term care needs and these needs will increase due to lower birth rates and longer life spans, and that proper government planning to meet those needs in the long-terms need must be taken.
- Systemic changes are needed to improve the safety and security of residents. The Wettlaufer inquiry looked at the rare circumstance of a serial murderer but the coalition notes that this observation also applies to the general level of violence in long-term care homes. While the Inquiry report rightfully notes that there is much loving care that happens in long-term care, and the Coalition also wants to underline this, there is still a significant issue of violence that urgently needs to be addressed. The Ontario Health Coalition release a major [new research](#)

[report](#) earlier this year revealing that resident-on-resident homicide rates are higher in Ontario's long-term care homes than in any major cities in the province and that staff accident and injury rates are the highest of any sector in our economy. The government must improve care levels to address the safety issues raised by the Wettlaufer Inquiry and also these safety issues that should be intolerable in a civilized society.

- Improved care levels will require adequate resources including provincial funding to achieve.
- The inquiry did not call for deregulation or reduced inspections. The Ontario Health Coalition has called on the government to reject lobbying by long-term care home owners for deregulation and reduced inspection and enforcement.

Today the Ford government did not make any clear commitment to implement the Inquiry recommendations, only to review them and report back in a year. The Ford government also announced this morning that it is going to delay significant cuts to Ontario's long-term care homes by three months. Those cuts hit municipal long-term care homes particularly hard. But the Ford government did not cancel the cuts to the two special funds that amount to \$34 million, they only delayed them for three months.

The cuts to the two funds outlined in an earlier [news release](#) are in addition to real dollar overall budget cuts for Ontario's long-term care sector and long-term care homes are reporting that they are looking at significant program and service cuts as a result.