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For Immediate Release

## Provincial Health Coalitions Put Federal Parties on Notice: Canadians Demand Real Action to Fix Long-Term Care

(Canada-wide) - With a federal election called for September 20, provincial Health Coalitions across Canada are putting all federal political parties on notice. The federal government could have already set [real national standards](#) for long-term care in legislation or an emergency federal-provincial-territorial funding accord with sufficient funding attached to leverage real change. Instead, nothing has happened. Canadians expect all political parties to commit to bring in national standards for long-term care as a matter of national priority.

Long-term care standards must at minimum be publicly governed and accountable to the public, not a technical committee appointed behind the scenes, warn the Coalitions. They should require improved care, annual surprise inspections and enforcement of standards, and public reporting. Funding should be attached to those requirements.

[More than 14,000 long-term care and retirement home residents and staff died in the first two waves of the pandemic](#) and more than 80,000 residents and staff have been infected in the pandemic to date, many never to regain their former health status. Canada's record is staggering, much worse than our international peer nations. It underscores that the horrific toll of death and suffering in Canada's long-term care was preventable. Fully 69% of our country's pandemic deaths occurring among residents compared to the international average of 41%.

"The devastation in our nation's long-term care homes requires a commitment to "never again"', said Chris Parsons, coordinator of the Nova Scotia Health Coalition. "But to date, substantially nothing has happened. Health and seniors' advocates across Canada will not accept a private process for technical and industry standards as a replacement for the urgent political leadership that was promised."

In the fall 2020 [Throne Speech](#), Prime Minister Trudeau committed to doing everything possible, including laying criminal charges for those who neglect elderly vulnerable Canadians and working with provinces and territories to set national standards. In December the Prime Minister [recommitted](#) to setting the standards and intimated that provinces refusing to adopt the "highest standards" would not receive federal funding for long-term care.

"Prime Minister Trudeau has repeatedly made empty promises about national standards for long-term care," added Sandra Azocar, executive director of the Friends of Medicare in Alberta. "But in the budget the federal government allotted only \$3 billion over 5 years, amounting to \$600 million per year, split between the provinces and territories. As a comparison, the [Parliamentary Budget Officer](#) estimated that necessary reform and standards in long-term care would cost an additional \$13.7 billion per year. We are demanding a real commitment backed by dollars from all federal parties as a matter of national priority."

"There are no strings attached to public dollars to ensure they go to increasing care and not profit-taking. The promised criminal charges have evaporated and the promise for national standards has been [taken over and sidelined](#) by the accreditation and standards-creating industry with the full support of Trudeau's government,"

said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “This is nowhere near what it should be. The core morals of our society have been breached, thousands have suffered and died. We are demanding real action, not a public relations side show and delay tactics.”

The technical committee in charge of Trudeau’s “national standards” has been appointed behind the scenes by representatives of the industry and will have a very limited scope that lacks the ability to establish clear roles for the federal and provincial governments or hold private for-profit operators to account. Their technical standard will not be ready until the end of 2022.

Trudeau’s process will also not take on the role of profit in the long-term care sector.

“Canadians are outraged that thousands of deaths occurred under the care of private for-profit operators who continued to pay large dividends to their shareholders throughout the pandemic,” reported Kathleen Jamieson, Seniors Care Co-chair with the BC Health Coalition. “The for-profits have clearly demonstrated to the public that they care more about their investor’s returns than the life of the adults in their care. A national standard that fails to hold for-profits to account is no standard at all.”

“The tragic and preventable loss of more than 14,000 elderly and vulnerable Canadians in care, who depended on our governments to protect them, will not be forgotten,” said Mary Boyd, chair of the PEI Health Coalition. “Canadians will not wait until 2023 for a technical unenforceable industry-set standard. We will not go back to the state of long-term care in our country before the pandemic. We insist all federal parties commit to the promises already made to “take any action it can”, institute *real* national standards & hold accountable those responsible for neglect and suffering of seniors, as a matter of top urgency.”