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Attn: Assignment Editor

For Immediate Release

Ford Government's Home Care Changes Dismantle Public Control, Risk Privatization: Health Coalition

Toronto – In a press conference at the Ontario Legislature today, spokespeople for the Ontario Health Coalition raised concerns about the Ford government's new home care legislation that the Health Coalition reported is being rushed through the legislature at break-neck speed. The Bill, Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act 2020, was introduced last Tuesday, was rushed through First Reading, and is already in the final stages of its Second Reading debate. The Coalition is seeking answers as to whether or not there will be any public hearings on the legislation and is asking the Ford government to slow it down and consult with Ontarians, noting that the changes will impact more than 730,000 Ontarians who use home care services and many thousands more who require community care services.

Among the key concerns of the Health Coalition:

- The new legislation repeals the existing home and community care law and transfers almost all of its key elements to regulation which can be changed by the Ministers of the Ford government in Cabinet without ever going to a vote in the Legislature.
- The new legislation dismantles all remaining public governance and control of home care and proposes to hand it off to provider companies, including for-profit companies, that do not have public governance and accountability.
- There are no provisions to improve access to care, equity, home care assessments, quality of care and staffing shortages, and nothing that will stop the major problem of missed visits that risk people's safety.
- There are numerous provisions that would expand privatization not only of home care, but also potentially of parts of hospital and long-term care.
- The proposal fragments care to a vast array of providers who would contract, sub-contract and run home care in different ways in different regions with very few public protections. It does not "integrate" home and community care.

"This legislation has been created in the backrooms without any public consultation," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "It is being railroaded through at break-neck speed before the vast majority of the more than 750,000 people impacted even know that it is happening. This is poor policy that benefits private interests seeking to increase their market share or their profit margins but it does not serve the public interest."

"The major problems in home care require improved oversight, responsiveness and public accountability, not the total dismantling of public oversight," she added. "Handing more of home care over to private for-profit interests and expanding the scope for private for-profit companies to take over residential care for Ontarians is a recipe for disaster."

The Coalition is calling on the Ford government to halt Bill 175 and consult with Ontarians to develop a public non-profit home care system that would integrate care and ensure it is provided in the public interest. They are also calling for improvement, not devolution, of community care which has suffered through years of underfunding.