



July 22, 2020

For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

## **95% of Ontario Long-Term Care Staff Report Staffing Shortages Leaving Basic Care Needs Unmet: Health Coalition Releases Staffing Survey Calling for Ford Government to Take Action**

Toronto – Staff describe it as “heartbreaking”, “wrong” and “a far cry from what they deserve”. The Ontario Health Coalition released the results of a [survey](#) today of more than 150 long-term care staff about staffing and care levels in Ontario’s long-term care homes. The survey asked whether staffing is worse, better or the same since prior to COVID-19. The Coalition held roundtables and released a [report](#) last December in partnership with Unifor on the PSW staffing crisis in long-term care. Today’s survey covers all staff and looks at what has happened since. Conducted over the week from July 10 to July 17 in every region of Ontario, the survey found that 95 percent of the staff report that their long-term care homes are short staffed and 53% of those report that they are short shortages every day. Sixty-three percent of the staff report that staffing levels are worse than before COVID-19 hit and 28 percent said that staffing levels are the same. It is undisputed that there was a critical shortage already, prior to COVID-19.

Staff have been denied vacation, stat holidays and weekends under emergency orders since the beginning of the pandemic. Staff have left due to fear, injuries, lack of childcare, and the requirement to choose one home in which to work. Some homes have dozens of staff lines unfilled. Many work short every day, every shift. Most describe worse staffing levels on weekends and evenings and unsafe levels of staffing are routine. Some homes have recently cut back staff hours and are limiting overtime despite severe shortages.

When asked what care they could not provide, staff delineated a list that is deeply disturbing. More than 100 staff surveyed report the following: baths and showers are missed regularly leaving residents without proper washing because there are too few staff to use lifts safely and because of rushing; emotional support was described as “non-existent” and most staff reported there was little to no time to do it despite residents’ loneliness and depression; there is no time to complete Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as brushing teeth, shaving, nail care; care is described as rushed all the time.

More than 50 staff surveyed report that there is not enough time to feed and hydrate residents properly, to reposition them so as to avoid bedsores, to toilet them when they need it. Staff report that there are more frequent falls as a result of lack of time and supervision. A number of staff report that there are few to no activities, no entertainment, no rehabilitation, inadequate laundry leaving shortages of linens and supplies, not enough staff to do medication carts on time, and an overall unacceptable quality of care. Staff descriptions of shortages and care that cannot be done are shocking, and a sample of their responses is included in the report.

The Health Coalition is warning Ontario’s long-term care homes are not ready for a second wave of COVID-19. Quebec’s and British Columbia’s governments have intervened, improving wages, providing full-time work, paying for staff training, engaging in recruitment to get staffing levels up to safety. These have not happened in Ontario despite repeated calls for the same measures and a deep consensus among advocates that the government must set a minimum care standard of an average minimum of 4-hours of care per resident per day. The Coalition issued an [open letter](#) to Doug Ford signed onto by more than 200 organizations representing two million Ontarians calling for immediate action yet nothing has been done to address the staffing emergency.