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Health Coalition Applauds Excellent Recommendations Released by Long-Term Care Commission Today: Calls on Ford Government to Implement Them Immediately

Toronto – The second set of recommendations from Ontario’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission were released today (here: <http://www.ltccommission-commissionsld.ca/>). The Commission continues to do excellent work and the Ontario Health Coalition said it is fully in support of the recommendations which focus on restoring comprehensive inspections in all LTC homes, improving compliance and enforcement of care standards and care plans, ensuring that staffing levels are inspected, and improving infection control measures in long-term care homes. In its first set of recommendations the Commission focused on improving staffing levels, which is vital and still has not been done, among other measures.

The Coalition released a report on the large outbreaks in health care settings yesterday. The report covers large outbreaks up to December 1 in which the spread of COVID-19 is not contained and 10 or more residents and staff have caught the virus. We found 117 currently active outbreaks in long-term care homes of which 45 are large outbreaks. Of these:

- 45 outbreaks include more than 10 residents and staff infected;
- 20 outbreaks include more than 50 residents and staff infected;
- 10 outbreaks include more than 99 residents and staff infected;
- 5 outbreaks include more than 150 residents and staff infected;
- 1 outbreak includes more than 200 residents and staff infected.

Clearly the measures that have been undertaken to contain the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care homes are not adequate, said Coalition executive director Natalie Mehra. The release and report can be found here: <https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/release-by-no-measure-are-they-under-control-large-outbreaks-of-covid-19-in-long-term-care-hospitals-retirement-homes-escalating-sharply-new-tracking-report/>

“The alarming spread of COVID-19 right now in long-term care homes is what makes the Long-Term Care Commission’s recommendations so important,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director. “More than 3,462 residents and staff have been infected and hundreds have died in the second wave alone, since the beginning of September.”

“The measures recommended by the Commission, including clear assignment of an infection control lead and on-site comprehensive inspections expressly including staffing levels and infection control are critical to containing the spread of COVID-19,” said Dr. Amit Arya, palliative care physician and Board member of the Ontario Health Coalition. “We are worried about the spin that we are already seeing from Ministry spokespeople. The bottom line as clearly validated by the Commission is that the comprehensive inspections are vital and they have not been happening. These recommendations must be implemented now.”

The Coalition also applauded the Commission’s courageous and correct stance on the inadequacy of accountability and enforcement. “There can be no more “slap on the wrist” with no consequences for long-term care homes that have poor care,” concluded Ms. Mehra. “We wholeheartedly support the Commission’s call for real accountability and fines for those homes that do not improve their care and infection control measures. They are risking human lives and it must stop.”