



## **Health Coalition Supports Interim Recommendations from Long-Term Care Commission: Calls on Ford Government to Implement Them Immediately**

Toronto – The Ford government’s Long-Term Care Commission’s interim recommendations support the need for immediate action on improving care levels by increasing the supply of PSWs and an appropriate staff mix including nurses to meet the complex care needs of residents. They also validate the Coalition’s long-standing call for a minimum average care standard of 4-hours, access to full-time work, and immediate implementation of these measures. In addition, they reinforce the calls for family and caregiver access to residents. These are important, said the Ontario Health Coalition in reaction to the release of the recommendations today.

Also vitally important, reported the Coalition, are the recommendations that hospitals be teamed with long-term care homes and public health units to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in the homes that are at risk, and to get these relationships in place immediately rather than waiting for after outbreaks are out of control. The Commission called for residents to be moved out of long-term care homes to hospitals or other alternative settings to avoid further transmission of the virus and to help them recover, and it called for these plans to be put in place in advance. The Coalition expressed support for this plan, provided it does not include transfers of residents to private for-profit retirement homes which are not health care facilities or coercive measures to move residents home without consent and robust care.

Finally, the Commission has made important recommendations to prioritize testing and results for long-term care homes, create a dedicated infection control lead, and enhance inspections and compliance with a focus on infection control measures. The Coalition, which represents more than half-a-million Ontarians, reported that is in full support of these recommendations.

“Many of these measures are things that we have been advocating for months,” reported Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition which has put out repeated reports and releases through the pandemic calling for an immediate staff recruitment drive by the government, minimum care standards, teams to be set up to go into the homes, residents to be moved out where care and infection control cannot be safely provided in the homes, testing as a priority, improved infection control and management and inspections.

“There can be no excuse for further failure to implement these recommendations immediately. There must be accountability for the failure to have done so in the summer months when case levels had gone down and there was a lull in the pandemic. But what is most important to express today is that not one more day can be lost now. Mr. Ford, it is beyond time to act. Ontarians need you to get these measures in place now,” she said. The Coalition also called on all provincial political parties to support the minimum care standards Private Member’s Bill, Bill 13 the Time to Care Act, that is going to Second Reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28.

The Coalition is concerned that there is not enough concrete detail regarding critically low staffing levels which are vital to all measures to protect residents and staff alike from harm. Since the government has failed to address the staffing crisis to date, the Coalition wants to see a concrete recommendation to which the government must be held to account. However, the recommendations overall are very strong and an important start, concluded the Coalition.