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Health Coalition Disappointed with Ford Government's Staffing Report Announcement: No Recruitment Drive Announced, Timelines for Staffing Improvements Mean Slight Improvements Year After Next

Toronto – As more and more long-term care homes fall into dire staffing crises, the Ontario Health Coalition expressed its anger and disappointment with the government's staffing report released today.

"We expected that they would launch a recruitment drive right now because long-term care is in the worst crisis it has ever been in. Instead, we got a report that is tone deaf and has no sense of urgency. It is full of buzzwords and reannouncements and includes a timeline that is too late to make any difference in the lifetimes of the people who are living in the homes now," said Natalie Mehra, executive director.

"In contrast, the province of Quebec launched a central recruitment drive, hired 10,000 PSWs, paid them for training, fast tracked the training and got them into long-term care homes in time for the second wave," said Ms. Mehra noting that Quebec accomplished all of this between June 1 and October. "This shows what a government that is actually committed to saving lives and providing even basic care to keep people alive and safe does. Compare what Ontario is doing. It is scandalous."

The concrete items announced are as follows:

- Reannouncement of the 3,700 staff (across all health care) that was supposed to start in September. No evidence that this is actually happening.
- Reannouncement of the new beds and money for them. (Note: more beds with existing staff will actually make staffing and care levels per resident worse not better.)
- Adoption of for-profit's language of "continuous quality improvement" echoing the language of the for-profit long-term care lobby. This is a euphemism for not having comprehensive surprise inspections, enforcement and accountability, penalties for negligent home operators.
- This is new: the Ford government says that they will spend "up to" \$1.9 billion by 2024-25 to improve staffing. We are not sure why the words "up to" are included.
- By the end of 2021 -22 they would have 15 mins more hands-on direct care. This is the earliest date for which they have any commitment to improved care. Bottom line: it means that by the April after next, there will be 15 minutes more daily hands-on direct care (RN, RPN, PSW).
- By the end of 2022-23 another 15 minutes of daily hands-on direct care.
- They have back-end loaded it – the larger increases are in year 3 (25 mins) and year 4 (20 mins).
- Thus, by the end of four years from now, and two years after the next provincial election (which is well beyond the average life-expectancy in long-term care) residents would finally get to 4-hours of care per resident per day.

There is no information on when the government will actually start any serious recruitment. No word on improving full-time work. No word on improving wages and working conditions. "If we sound frustrated, it is because we are. Without any exaggeration thousands of residents are suffering, they are dying. This report reads like a delay tactic, not like any serious commitment to address the critical shortfalls of care that are happening right now," Ms. Mehra concluded.