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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

COVID-19 Spreading in Hospitals and Long-Term Care Homes: Updated List & Call for Ford Government to Take More Concrete Action

Toronto – The Ontario Health Coalition, which has been tracking and posting confirmed cases of COVID-19 in health care settings since the third week of March, released its latest update with new outbreaks in hospitals and long-term care. The Coalition has tracked 198 of the 226 confirmed cases among health care staff reported by the CBC from Ministry of Health data today. The Coalition is tracking patients in hospitals, residents in long-term care and retirement homes, and health care staff from hospitals to public health and clinics. Today, the Coalition warned outbreaks are spreading across the health care system and called on the Ontario government to take immediate concrete action to support the workforce, residents and patients. The updated list is posted on the Coalition website: <https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/update-hospital-and-long-term-care-health-care-workers-long-term-care-residents-infected-with-covid-19-2/>

In long-term care which is hardest hit right now, public health officials have recommended that long-term care homes direct staff to choose one workplace. The problem is that the staff have to wait years to become full-time, sometimes up to 10-years. They have multiple jobs moving between long-term care homes, also hospitals, home care and other places. Now, some homes are telling staff they must choose one part-time job with no income replacement at the same time as the staff are taking on personal risk to help all of us get through the pandemic. Homes already have severe shortages and some are implementing this measure and some are not. The conditions of work in long-term care are the conditions of care for residents and their families. “Health Coalition members including families, seniors, advocates, unions and health professionals have total consensus that this workforce needs immediate concrete support.”

Yesterday, it was reported that the B.C. government made all long-term care home staff employees of the provincial government, provided full-time jobs and increased their pay. In contrast, Ontario’s government passed a regulation under their emergency legislation that deregulates existing care standards in long-term care homes; enables the homes to contract out, bring in lesser trained and untrained staff and volunteers; and overrides existing collective agreements. Bill 124, which limits staff pay increases in the public sector to one per cent has not been rescinded so pay increases are still capped.

“The government and top public health officials need to grasp the reality of long-term care,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director. “We recognize that the homes are overwhelmed. But deregulation and an untrained workforce in long-term care which has residents with complex and heavy care needs, behaviours, high rates of violence and staff injury would be unsafe at any time. It is grievously unsafe with COVID-19. It is the opposite of what urgently needs to happen. Surely lowering wages, training and conditions cannot be the only thing that the provincial government does to address the devastation spreading through our long-term care homes,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition which conducted cross-province roundtables and released a recent [report](#) with recommendations to address the PSW crisis by improving conditions not deregulating them.

“The response in British Columbia, while it may not be an exact fit for Ontario, shows that far more can be done. We need to see immediate concrete action from our provincial government,” she added, calling for:

- Access to full-time work
- Improved pay and conditions
- Safety equipment and supplies

- A serious and immediate effort to recruit staff who are properly trained to work in the homes
- Improved transparency and meaningful public reporting of information.