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August 20, 2012

Hon. Deborah Matthews
Minister of Health and Long Term Care
10th Floor - Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews:

Re: PSW Registry Steering Committee

I am writing to inform you that the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) will be joining with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and withdrawing from the PSW Registry Steering Committee. The OFL does understand, appreciate and support the important role played by Personal Support Workers (PSWs) in our health care system. PSWs provide an array of services to their fellow Ontarians in their time of need in every community in our province.

While we appreciated the September 26, 2011 invitation via the Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) to join the PSW Registry Steering Committee we question this approach by government to stakeholder consultation. After receiving the invitation the OFL held a discussion with our affiliated unions who have Personal Support Worker members. The consensus of this meeting was that this invitation provided an opportunity to address issues of concern for both Ontarians who receive services and from PSWs themselves and their representatives.

Our action in withdrawing from the Steering Committee is prompted by the fact that we do not wish to be associated or seen to be supportive of your government's agenda on this matter.

Your government's agenda is wrong-headed in that it appears to be based on the belief that the existence of the PSW Registry will somehow address and resolve the challenges facing PSWs and the people they provide care for across Ontario. There is much your government could do to address the challenges facing PSWs beginning in the home care sector.

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Thousands of PSWs are members of OFL affiliated unions. The labour movement understands these challenges and how they may be addressed. We are quite willing to have such a discussion with your government. The inflexible operational starting date of June 1, 2012 creates a situation where the Registry exists but many PSWs and the wider public are unsure of what it is supposed to do and how it would accomplish whatever it was supposed to do.

Our letter of invitation noted that your Ministry "has provided parameters for the registry among which are: a phased implementation which will begin with the home care sector, mandatory registration, a grand-parenting process, and tiered access for clients and family caregivers as well as employers." You are aware of the sense of frustration felt by stakeholders on the Steering Committee as they asked through the Registry Directorate for clarification of issues from your government as the June 1, 2012 approached. All of these issues should have been clarified before the June 1, 2012 starting date of the Registry. This sense of frustration was exacerbated by your April 11 letter calling for "a process of reviewing, suspending or terminating PSW registration". It was inappropriate for you to introduce this complex issue that could potentially disrupt a PSW's ability to continue their work in their chosen field so late in their process.

PSWs will not be well served by this flawed Registry model. Neither will Ontarians and their families who rely on PSWs to provide the array of needed services in communities across Ontario.

It is for these reasons that the Ontario Federation of Labour is withdrawing from the PSW Registry Steering Committee.

Yours truly,



SID RYAN
President
Ontario Federation of Labour

copy: Charles Beer, Chair PSW Registry Steering Committee
OFL Health Care Committee

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