

Joint Statement Calling for Improvements in Access and Care in Ontario's Long Term Care Homes

Drafted in conjunction with the OHC by University of Toronto Health Policy Students

Jinyu Jing, Charlotte Pape, Maleeha Shams, Chuqiao Yan

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With an aging population, complex care needs, and increased incidence of dementia, the need for safe and appropriate care in Ontario is growing, yet there is no current plan to meet these requirements. Wait lists for long-term care number 34,000 and families are suffering, sometimes for years, without support. While every day tremendous compassion is demonstrated in long-term care homes across our province, there are persistent and pervasive problems, including: systemic inadequacy of care levels; homes working short-staffed; insufficient training and support to provide care for those with behavioural issues, and; shocking levels of fatal violence.

Care relationships in long-term care are central to treating long-term care residents, staff and families with dignity and respect. This means understanding that the conditions of work in long-term care homes are also the conditions of care. It means recognizing that Ontario's overburdened long-term care system is not meeting the current needs of residents, their families, and staff and needs to be properly resourced and organized to do so. Accessible long-term care solutions are urgently needed, as follows:

1. Improving care means adequate staff and an appropriate staff mix, providing enough time to care for and support residents, providing a stable work environment that encourages staff retention and care relationships, providing the training and education support needed to meet the needs of the increasing complexity of long-term care residents, and providing specialized behavioural supports in long-term care homes.

Daily hands-on care staffing levels should be set at an average of at least 4 hours of care per resident per day to promote health and protect from harm. This staffing standard should apply to direct daily hands-on care hours provided by RN, RPN and PSW/Aides and should not include Administrators, Directors of Care, Nurse Practitioners and others, and it must be measurable and enforceable.

2. Ontario's long-term care homes have the longest wait-lists in the country, high levels of occupancy, and increasing levels of acuity or complexity among residents. Wait lists now number more than 34,000. Ontario's current plan to build 30,000 long-term care spaces over the next 10 years, including 5,000 in the next 4 years, is inadequate and leaves tens of thousands of people without the care they need. The evidence shows that non-profit and public long-term care homes provide higher staffing levels, better resident care outcomes, and are preferred by Ontarians.

Ontario's government must plan to build capacity to meet the need for long-term care beds now, not a decade down the road, and this capacity should be built in public and non-profit homes that are operated for the public good.

We, the undersigned, are joining together to sign onto this call for improved levels of care and access to care in Ontario's long-term care homes as vital and urgent requirements to address the needs of current residents and those who are waiting for long-term care.