Change the Long-Term Care System: Better care, not more profits

OPEN LETTER TO ALL POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS

With great concern, we, a coalition of trade unions representing the majority of long-term care (LTC) workers and community stakeholders, are asking your party to end to the tragic failures of the for-profit long-term care system. We are calling for the end of profits in LTC and for the establishment of national LTC standards.

The pandemic has exposed inequities in our health care system. Frontline health workers and care recipients, especially those from marginalized and racialized groups of people, must be included in efforts to eliminate systemic racism and other barriers to care.

Painfully, we are aware that Canada has had extremely high rates of Covid-19 deaths in long-term care when compared to other OECD countries. Canada’s LTC infection totals have been more than ten times higher when compared to Australia, for example, or close to 4 times higher when compared to Ireland 1.

Results from a study published in CMAJ found evidence that for-profit LTC homes in Canada had more significant COVID-19 outbreaks and a higher number of deaths 2. The LTC system is under-resourced and unable to meet the growing demands of the Canadian people and continued expansion of LTC into the for-profit sector will surely decrease oversight and accountability while also driving working and care standards down.

Federal leaders must work with provincial ones to find ways to improve standards for long-term care. We are calling on the adoption of national standards which include:

- Increased federal funding that is conditional upon enforceable national long-term care standards
- Phasing out the for-profit long-term care system in Canada
- Improved working conditions, including requirements like staff training, better wages, and access to paid sick leave
- Improved living conditions for residents, such as ending the use of multi-bed rooms
- Adequate staffing to provide the necessary level of care within facilities, so that residents receive a minimum of 4.1 direct care hours per day
- Improved health and safety measures, including infectious disease protocols and training for all staff, volunteers and families
- Measures to address staffing shortages, retention and attracting new workers to the industry.

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2 https://www.cmaj.ca/content/192/33/E946
Creating sustainable change is an immense challenge, but we believe that there is no alternative but to act now. Maintaining the status quo would be negligent and harmful to Canadians.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and working together as soon as possible towards an improved long-term care system.

Sincerely,

**Signatories:**

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