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Attn: Assignment Editor

McGuinty Breaks Election Promise for Minimum Standards of Care in Nursing Homes: Sharkey Report a Betrayal of Ontario Seniors – Health Coalition

Toronto –

“Ontario needs minimum standards of care in nursing homes that give seniors the “dignity and respect” they deserve, Premier Dalton McGuinty says. “We’re consulting on those standards right now, and the kind of standards that I want in place as Premier – and maybe as a son and maybe as somebody who worked as an orderly looking after WWI and WWII veterans, hands on – (are) standards that recognize the dignity and respect that we owe to our seniors,” McGuinty told reporters yesterday after a campaign event at a Guelph high school.”

Toronto Star October 5, 2007

(After a major media story about residents left in wet incontinence products and in response to the campaign to regulate Ontario’s nursing home industry to provide accountable levels of care, Dalton McGuinty made the above election promise to bring in minimum care standards.)

“The story today is that the McGuinty government is breaking its election promise to bring in a regulated minimum care standard for the 75,000 residents in Ontario’s nursing homes. We are deeply disappointed,” said Natalie Mehra, Director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

“Despite more than \$1 billion in increased funding for Ontario’s long term care homes since McGuinty came to office, according to the government’s own figures care levels have remained stagnant since 1995. Currently homes receive an annual increase in funding based on increased acuity (measured resident need). The expectation is that as measured need goes up, then levels of care should go up. But this is not happening. One would think that the McGuinty government would want improved accountability about how the money is being spent since their claims of increased care have been disproved by their own measures of care levels,” she explained.

(The health coalition recently released a report revealing the government’s numbers. It is available at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca)

“Today’s announcement is a betrayal of Ontario’s seniors,” said Derrell Dular, a member of the OHC Board and representative of the Alliance of Seniors/Older Canadians Network. “Take away the window dressing and it is clear that the Minister has gone back on his own promise and that of the Premier. Seniors will have to escalate our fight to win proper regulation and accountability for Ontario’s long term care homes.”

“Somehow the McGuinty government has twisted a report by a person who is not an expert in long term care homes to overcome a more than a decade’s worth of research irrefutably linking hours of hands-on care in nursing homes to resident outcomes such as reduced bed sores, reduced dehydration, reduced needs for hospitalization,” added Derek Chadwick, a member of the OHC Board and a representative of Canadian Pensioners Concerned. “You can’t replace that with surveys and committees that have no teeth. This report fails the seniors of Ontario.”

“As I suspected, it appears that Ms. Sharkey’s report was just a delay tactic. As advocates for residents and their families we have called for an improved funding mechanism - tied to measured need – that would improve the amount of daily hands-on care for residents. This is not over, and we reiterate that call today,” concluded Lois Dent of Concerned Friends.

The coalition is writing a full brief and analysis of the report which will be available tomorrow on the website at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

For more information: Call the Ontario Health Coalition at 416-441-2502.

