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600 Wabanaki Drive, Kitchener Ontario N2C 2K4

Ruth Pryce
President

Dayle Steadman
Vice President

Mike Camblin
Service & Manufacturing Rep

Jason Deneault
Financial Secretary

Unifor applauds investigation of Ontario's oversight of long-term care during pandemic

June 3, 2020

TORONTO – Unifor applauds the decision of the Ontario Ombudsman to investigate the provincial government's oversight of long-term care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"One thing that we know for certain is that this pandemic publicly exposed the precariousness of the long-term care system that we have been raising red flags about for years now," said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. "We know for a fact that if nursing homes were properly staffed, especially with personal support workers, we would have been in a much better position to weather a pandemic."

Six months ago, the Ontario Health Coalition report commissioned by Unifor "[Caring in Crisis; Ontario's Personal Support Worker Crisis](#)" was released at Queens Park. The report, compiled from a series of cross-province roundtable meetings with all stakeholders, raised the alarm over chronic short-staffing and mass exodus of PSWs leaving the industry.

As that report was released, Dias issued a [challenge to Premier Doug Ford](#) to spend one shift with him in a nursing home to see first-hand the everyday realities faced by workers and residents.

"While we appreciate any effort that puts the spotlight on what is happening in long-term care, it is disappointing that the voices of so many women on the frontlines have been ignored for so long," said Naureen Rizvi, Ontario Regional Director. "We can only hope that the Ombudsman will focus on listening to those women now."

The union believes the pandemic has lit fire to a tinder box of problems, where PSW's are first on the front lines. "No-one should be surprised that eight out of the 11 health care workers who have died from COVID-19 in Ontario are PSWs, who provide the most personal of care, with the least access to personal protective equipment," said Dias.

Information about the union's response to the pandemic, as well as resources for members can be found at unifor.org/COVID19.

To arrange for interviews, in-person or via Skype or FaceTime, please contact Unifor Communications Representative Hamid Osman at hamid.osman@unifor.org or 647-448-2823 (cell).