

February 8, 2019

Via email: ccu.moh@ontario.ca

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health and Long Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1E9

Minister Elliott,

For many in the healthcare sector, it has never been more difficult to get up in the morning and go to work every day. The past week has revealed a shocking series of revelations about steps your government appears to have taken towards threatening the quality of care they deliver, and the very foundation of public healthcare in the province of Ontario.

I have listened carefully as your government assured the public, through media, that privatization is not your goal. However, I find that difficult to reconcile with sweeping changes that seem to have quickly been drawn up behind closed doors.

As the elected representative of more than 168,000 working people in Ontario, including more than 26,000 healthcare workers, I invite you to correct this course and have an open conversation about how to improve healthcare for all.

Ontarians believed Premier Ford when he pledged to end hallway medicine during the provincial election. Your stated commitment to listen to front line staff is commendable, the workers affected know the issues they face every day, and hold the solutions. Front line staff who are members of our union would suggest that moving hospital and emergency care services out from public delivery would erode fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act and worsen working conditions.

Further, the brave paramedics at Ornge, members of Unifor, do not deserve the pressure of being specifically named for outsourcing as they perform a critical and highly stressful public service.

Unifor members know that outsourcing and privatization weaken quality and access to healthcare for patients, clients and residents. In our 2019 pre-budget submission, Unifor identified a number of ways your government can strengthen healthcare for all Ontarians.

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One of the most striking examples of where privatization has failed the people of Ontario is in the long-term care sector. The closure of thousands of chronic care and psychiatric beds in the 1990s and subsequent transfer to thousands of new for-profit long-term care beds set in motion a crisis that continues to escalate.

Studies have shown that for-profit facilities provide fewer hours of care per resident and have higher rates of resident complaints. The situation has been exacerbated by chronic staffing shortages at long-term care homes across the province, including a widespread shortage of Personal Support Workers (PSWs).

Not-for-profit and public homes have greater accountability and use any extra revenue to expand services and operations, rather than moving funds away from care to increase profit margins. Based on this government's recent actions, the vast majority of the thousands of new long-term care beds will be handed over to for-profit corporations. The current tendering process excludes municipalities from applying.

This one decision inches Ontario healthcare further into privatization. Before your government decides to take another step in that direction, I hope to meet with you and discuss a new plan, for making much needed investments in public healthcare that are supported by worker and patient experiences.

I request to meet at your earliest convenience to discuss this in greater detail. I appreciate your time and attention and hope to hear from your office shortly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Naureen Rizvi".

Naureen Rizvi
Ontario Regional Director

NR:lmc/cope-343

cc: Jerry Dias, Katha Fortier, Andy Savelle