

Statement from the Canadian Health Coalition

In support of Canadians who have lost loved ones in long-term care

On the occasion of the Broken Hearts, Empty Shoes event

at Parliament Hill, Ottawa

November 19, 2020

We stand with the families, residents, care workers and professionals in long-term care, and with all Canadians, in expressing our deepest sorrow for the loss of more than six thousand long-term care residents as a result of complications due to COVID-19. Words cannot adequately capture the meaning of their loss to our communities.

We join you in grieving and we join you in your urgent call for national standards for long-term care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed extraordinary heroism, selflessness, compassion and resilience in our health care system. It has brought to the forefront the immeasurable value of public health care in Canada and its foundational principles of equity and compassion.

At the same time, it has laid bare unconscionable inequities and shortfalls in care. As a nation we must address these with the utmost urgency.

The Canadian Health Coalition is calling for national standards that set consistent standards of care and staffing levels across the country. This strategy should include:

- Dedicated federal funding to the provinces and territories as part of the Canada Health Transfer
- National standards as a condition of federal funding that are similar to the criteria in the *Canada Health Act*. Seniors' care should be universal, public, comprehensive, accessible and portable
- A human resources strategy to guarantee a skilled seniors' care workforce and decent working conditions for care workers

While families, health care workers and communities are struggling to support each other, corporate interests are trying to profit. More than 17,000 residents and more than 10,000 staff in long-term care have been infected with COVID-19. In both the first wave of the pandemic and in the second wave to date, across Canada infection rates and death rates as a result of COVID-19 are far higher in homes owned by for-profit corporations. The level of care revealed in a number of these homes is a travesty and it underscores the perils of for-profit privatization of health care. As a national priority, we should be strengthening universal health care and our collective ability to care for one another. Governments at all levels must end for-profit care.

Now more than ever, we need a universal, public health care system that addresses the terrible inadequacies of care and supports for the elderly, that puts patients before profits, and that honours and extends the principles of the Canada Health Act. The suffering of the residents and staff in long-term care has indelibly marked the soul of our nation. We will not forget. Canadians call on our government to take action now so that out of this injustice we build a better society.