

## Ontario must take urgent action to solve PSW crisis

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**TORONTO** - Unifor report [Caring in Crisis: Ontario's Long-Term Care PSW Shortage](#) finds chronic under staffing in long-term care homes puts workers at risk and is hurting residents.

“Every step of the way, we heard that PSW’s face impossible workloads and heavy physical labour that leads to preventable injuries. These unsafe conditions, paired with, low pay, precarious working conditions and few or no benefits must end,” said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. “I challenge Premier Doug Ford to spend a shift at a long-term care home in Ontario with me to witness the dangerous and disrespectful conditions that seniors in care must live with.”

Unifor partnered with the Ontario Health Coalition to hold eight round table forums across the province to develop the report and seek recommendations on the crisis of long-term care. PSWs, home operators, family councils and college PSW program administrators participated in the fact-finding conversations, that were hosted between May and June of 2019.

The resulting report identifies nine priority recommendations to address the crisis:

1. **Provide enhanced funding to improve wages and working conditions for PSWs.** Compensation must be competitive to attract staff to long-term care. Funding should be tied to increasing the number of full-time positions, reducing precarious work and improving wages and benefits.
2. **Levels of care in Ontario’s long-term care homes must be improved and this improvement must be mandatory and enforceable.** Increased funding must go to improving care. The Ontario government must institute a regulated minimum care standard of an average of four hours of daily hands-on direct nursing and personal support per resident to provide care and protect from harm.
3. **A provincial human resource recruitment and retention plan must be developed with clear, publicly reported timelines and targets, and accountability for meeting these targets in order to implement the minimum care standard.**
4. **Long-term care homes must be resourced with trained staff able to deal with the increasing responsive behaviours in the homes.** Homes should have in-house Behavioural Support Ontario (BSO) teams in addition to the four-hour minimum care standard (above).
5. **Provincial standards for PSW courses must be set to ensure that students are prepared for the real work environment.** Provide resources and leadership to create partnerships between college PSW programs and long-term care homes, apprenticeships, paid co-op placements in long-term care, and other real-world training and work experience as part of all PSW courses.
6. **Tuition costs must be reduced; access to grants, daycare and other subsidies to support students must be provided.**
7. **Staffing shortages must be reported to the Ministry of Health and posted in each home.**

8. **A publicity campaign to share a positive image of personal support work must be developed to increase retention and attract students to the sector.**
9. **Capacity in our public hospitals must be restored including psychogeriatric and complex continuing care beds.** The offloading of patients whose care needs are too complex to be appropriate for long-term care must be stopped.

"At every long-term care home, on every shift, in the north and south, rural and urban, we hear the same thing. The PSW staffing crisis is hurting Ontarians," Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of Ontario Health Coalition. "Long-term care homes are short-staffed they cannot provide the basic care that residents need, risking safety. The tools to fix this situation are in the hands of the provincial government which instead of acting urgently to fix the crisis, is cutting funding."

More than 350 long-term care human resource managers, administrators, directors, owners, union representatives, PSWs, family council members, college PSW program staff, municipal councillors, advocates for the elderly and local health coalitions participated.

"A PSW may have up to twelve residents to care for on a day shift and sometimes due in part to working short ratios are even higher," said Cindy Hasler, Unifor Local 504 Vice President and Personal Support Worker. "We rush to do our jobs and try to serve as many residents as we can. But in reality, seniors and health workers are suffering from the chronic understaffing in our homes."

The union released a video that taps into the reality of working and living in long-term homes. To view the Unifor "*Crisis in long-term care*" video [click here](#).

The report is party of Unifor's Care Takes Time campaign aims to reverse long-term care funding cuts and build a sector that respects patient dignity and demands fairness for healthcare workers.

For more information on the campaign visit [www.caretakestime.ca](http://www.caretakestime.ca)

Unifor represents more than 30,000 health care workers, including hospitals, long-term care, emergency services, and community and social services and is Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 315,000 workers in every major area of the economy. The union advocates for all working people and their rights, fights for equality and social justice in Canada and abroad, and strives to create progressive change for a better future.

For more information, please contact Unifor Communications Representative Hamid Osman at [hamid.osman@unifor.org](mailto:hamid.osman@unifor.org) or (647) 448-2823 (cell).