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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE: Albertans & Manitobans rally today to #FixSeniorsCareNOW!

Today, Friends of Medicare, Manitoba Health Coalition, our allies, and advocates from across Alberta and Manitoba are taking to social media to call on our respective governments to #FixSeniorsCareNOW.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating and disproportionate toll on Canada's seniors. With approximately [82% of deaths coming from LTC facilities](#), this pandemic has exposed the real-life consequences of our governments' inaction.

Canada's seniors' care system has been in crisis for far too long. Decades of privatization and the inequity wrought by perpetual cost cutting has resulted in a system that is chronically understaffed and under-resourced, and which was woefully unprepared to contend with the added pressures of COVID-19.

"For decades, FOM and seniors' advocates have been sounding the alarm over issues in Alberta's seniors' care system, to no avail," says Sandra Azocar, Executive Director of Friends of Medicare. "With COVID-19, the pressures have only increased, and we are now seeing the consequences in black and white. Our seniors deserve better."

"What we are seeing now is reprehensible, but in no way unexpected," says Brianne Goertzen, Provincial Director of the Manitoba Health Coalition. "We are witnessing the direct result of increasing privatization of the seniors' care systems in Alberta and throughout the country. If Manitoba is to learn anything from this pandemic, it is that we must invest and expand in our public system, rather than continue along the same path."

Today, FOM and MHC are calling for the following measures to be put into place:

- **Working conditions are care conditions:** Employees at seniors' facilities are stretched thin. Chronic understaffing means compromised quality of care, and jeopardized safety for both our loved ones and staff. We need legislated staff-to-patient ratios to ensure improved quality care and safety.
- **People before profit:** Every dollar in profit is a dollar not spent on care. Private companies who both operate facilities and are contracted out to provide services make a fortune off our loved ones, and leave facilities understaffed and under-resourced. We must prioritize care and eliminate profit from seniors' care.
- **Establish a national seniors strategy:** Seniors' care often falls outside the scope of the Canada Health Act. Instead, provinces and territories have been left to decide what gets regulated, enforced, and provided, leaving many without proper care. We need parallel legislation which lays out national standards, including funding, to ensure ALL seniors have access to the care they need and deserve.

The number of people who will require seniors' care is expected to increase exponentially within the next couple of decades. This crisis can't be put off any longer. We need government action. We need to fix seniors' care now.

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For more information:

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