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**FREE TUITION POLICY WILL DECREASE
NOT INCREASE PSW ENROLMENT
March 1, 2021**

With our decades' long investment in PSW programs, Ontario's school boards applaud the provincial government's new free tuition and paid placements for PSWs. But we are shocked and dismayed to discover the bias against Adult and Continuing Education programs which aren't covered under this policy.

We learned last week that PSW students enrolled at our 23 school boards switched from our programs to community colleges for the free tuition and paid placements. Our enrolment is now down. By excluding school board programs, the new government policy will lead to a decrease in PSW enrolment throughout the province rather than the intended increase.

Ontario's Adult and Continuing Education programs have certified 30,000 Personal Service Workers in the last decade and a half. We graduate 2,000 PSW students annually. With an 85% graduation rate, the programs' learning outcomes exceed the 50% graduation rate of colleges. And with the same certification, school board programs have a materials' fee only, far less than college tuitions. For years we have delivered an accelerated PSW program. Our curriculum provides more than the required 600 hours in six months or less. And school boards have historic success with PSW programs, with 95% of our grads getting jobs during placements.

Unlike post-secondary programs, we accept a broader range of people including mature students who do not have a high school diploma, newcomers and refugees (who often have difficulty with onerous college forms) and people with low incomes. They embrace a new career through Adult and Continuing Education where they are also able to graduate with both the Ontario Secondary School Diploma and their PSW certificate. Our high success rates are due to the front and back end wrap around services we provide including literacy, numeracy, ESL and employment services. The students graduate with all Ministry of Education, Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and Ministry of Long-Term Care's Requirements.

By excluding Ontario's Adult and Continuing Education PSW programs from the free tuition funding, and paid placements, school boards and Ontario's health care system will be diminished at the worst time possible.

We would like to meet with the Minister of Colleges and Universities to discuss the inclusion of Ontario's school boards in the government's funding initiative in order to help it meet its goal of graduating and retaining the largest possible number of capable and qualified PSWs.

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