

Ontario Health Coalition

15 Gervais Drive, Suite 305, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1Y8 tel: 416-441-2502 fax: 416-441-4073
email: ohc@sympatico.ca www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

September 19, 2007
Attn: Assignment Editor

For Immediate Release

Private clinics will imperil local hospitals:

Coalition accuses Tory of pandering to business interests at the expense of the public hospital system

Toronto – John Tory's plans to introduce for-profit hospital clinics are will worsen shortages of doctors, anesthesiologists, nurses and other health professionals, warned the Ontario Health Coalition in response to Tory's speech this morning.

"John Tory is manipulating patient concerns about wait times to create a crisis so that he can push privatization," warned Natalie Mehra, director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "For-profit hospital clinics do not add one single new doctor or nurse into our health system. In fact, the main beneficiary from Tory's health policies will be the for-profit hospital lobby."

"The real wait times issue is the number of anesthesiologists, operating room nurses and surgeons. Shortages of these key personnel are the major limiting factor on increasing the number of procedures done in our non-profit hospitals."

"Municipalities and local hospitals across the province are desperately trying to attract scarce doctors to their communities. But for-profit clinics tend to locate in larger urban centres where there is a bigger "market" of people who can afford out-of-pocket fees for supplementary services from which the clinics sell to make profits.

"While Tory's plan may help out the for-profit health industry lobby, it will imperil hospital services in towns across Ontario by worsening their staffing shortages."

"John Tory has a lot to answer for. The for-profit MRI/CT clinics brought in by the Harris government siphoned radiologists and technologists from nearby non-profit hospitals and actually led to cuts in MRI hours in the community hospitals. The for-profit cancer treatment clinic brought in by the Harris government was shut down after it was proven by the provincial auditor to cost significantly more – and it poached nurses and its oncologist from the public non-profit system," she added.

"Can Sarnia's hospital stand to lose their only oncologist to a private for-profit clinic in a big city, for example?" asked Mehra. "Of course not. There isn't any town in the province where there is a surplus of specialists and nurses to move out to for-profit businesses."

"What John Tory is talking about is U.S.-style for-profit hospital companies moving into Ontario and competing with our local non-profit hospitals for scarce health professionals and funding. That's not good health policy. It is simply John Tory pandering to a set of business interests."

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