

For Immediate Release
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Trojan horse of privatization dogs Tory on the campaign trail *John Tory's promotion of for-profit clinics threatens local public hospitals*

TORONTO – A giant replica of the historical Trojan horse followed Progressive Conservative leader John Tory for his disastrous support for private clinics as he campaigned in a Toronto neighbourhood this morning.

"Tory is the first political leader to campaign openly for private clinics and for-profit hospitals since the inception of Medicare," said Natalie Mehra, Director of the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC), referring to Tory's private health care announcements made yesterday in Toronto. "Private clinics will drain our public health care system by siphoning off physicians and other health care professionals, seriously risking services in our local hospitals."

To make its point concrete, the OHC's Trojan horse will follow Tory on the campaign trail, drawing a parallel between the dangerous false gift and Tory's manipulative privatization campaign.

"The Conservatives' plan would not create one new doctor or nurse," Mehra said. "In fact, it would siphon them out of the public system, worsening doctor and nurse shortages and making the wait times longer for the majority of Ontarians. It would be a disaster for our community hospitals, especially in rural areas."

Mehra noted that lobby groups pushing these clinics make profits from charging OHIP and from billing extra by selling untested or unnecessary health services to patients who pay out-of-pocket. Doctors and nurses leave public non-profit hospitals and end up spending an increasing portion of their time providing unnecessary or untested services. "Evidence from Britain's experiment with private hospital clinics shows that private clinics charge 11% more for quicker, cheaper patients, leaving the heavier care to the public system at the same time as they rob its scarcest health professionals," Mehra said.

"Under a John Tory government, more and more private operators will set up shop in Ontario, greatly expanding the role and presence of for-profit health care, including the American for-profit hospitals and health companies that have created such a crisis in the U.S.," Mehra warned. "Tory's health privatization plans are a giant step towards the Americanization of our health system."

"Tory's extreme privatization is way out of step with Ontarians who believe it is unethical to make profits from sick and elderly patients," Mehra said. "Anyone who values public health care will have to reject Tory's false 'gift' for the damage it will do to the public system."