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For Immediate Release

**Two-Tier Health Clinic Opening in Kingston Today Contravenes Law:
Ontario Health Coalition Calls on Ministry to Take Action**

Kingston-The Ontario Health Coalition has requested that the Minister of Health take action to stop a two-tier clinic from siphoning doctors and nurses out of the public health system to serve wealthy queue-jumpers with unnecessary health services. The clinic is opening its doors in Kingston today.

The clinic, called "Health For Life" charges an initial year fee of \$2,500 and \$2,000 each subsequent year for enhanced health services. Marketing for such "boutique" medicine clinics is generally targeted to those who are known as the "wealthy well" or the "worried wealthy".

"In our view, even at this stage, the company's advertising appears to violate Ontario's Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act by offering to confer preferential access to insured health care services," said Ross Sutherland, RN, Kingston Health Coalition co chair. "In addition, the Canada Health Act requires the province to provide equal access to medically necessary health care. If violations are found the clinic risks fines under Ontario law and the province risks cuts to its transfers from the federal government under the Canada Health Act. Any physicians that sell two-tier services risk fines and discipline for professional misconduct."

"We believe that this situation is unethical, unlawful and destructive, and we are asking the McGuinty government to act immediately to stop it," he added.

"We are deeply concerned about the attempt to create Americanized two-tier health services and undermine the achievements of universal Medicare," added Natalie Mehra. "In its advertising, the company is charging a fee for preferential access to physician and related services, co-mingling unnecessary services with those that are insured by OHIP. The Health Coalition raised the issue with the Ministry this afternoon. We are optimistic that the government will intervene to protect the principle of equal access to health services for all Canadians, regardless of income."

Background:

- 1) The offer to accept payment for conferring preferential access, the act of paying or providing preferred access for those who pay, or failure to report such activities contravenes the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act and are subject to a fine that the Ministry can levy.
- 2) The provision of intake, medical history and medical records are covered by OHIP and cannot be subject to fees under the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.
- 3) Clinics that provide preferred access to insured services as a result of paying fees are in violation of the Canada Health Act that states that the health care insurance plan of a province "must provide for insured health services on uniform terms and conditions and on a basis that does not impede or preclude, either directly or indirectly whether by charges made to insured persons or otherwise, reasonable access to those services by insured persons..." The province is expected to enforce the CHA and can have its transfer payments from the federal government reduced for violations.
- 4) Clinics cannot refuse patients who refuse to pay block fees and cannot provide preferred access for those who do pay the fees.

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