

Ontario Health Coalition

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December 5, 2012

For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Unprecedented Health Cuts, Privatization and Dismantling of Hospitals Starting Across Ontario: OHC Report

Toronto – Ontario’s health care funding, already nearly the lowest per person in the country, is being curtailed by \$3 billion, resulting in unprecedented hospital and home care service cuts across the province. The Ontario Health Coalition has produced a tally of the cuts by region and community. The results, released today in a new report called, “The Austerity Index: Health care cuts and deficits across Ontario” include a litany of closed hospital clinics, more than one hundred bed closures, lengthening wait lists in home care and accelerating privatization.

“We are receiving reports from patients and careworkers daily who are telling us about service cuts all across Ontario,” said Natalie Mehra, Director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “Outpatient clinics are being closed down and privatized. Hospital beds are being closed and services cut. Home care funding, just announced - seven months into this fiscal year - is not adequate to deal with existing wait lists let alone the more aggressive offloading of patients from hospitals. More and more patients are being denied home care or referred to other services that are not adequate to meet their needs.”

Cascading downloading of patients:

Global budgets for hospitals are now set at 0%, far less than the rate of inflation and the impact of population growth and aging. As a result, hospitals are reporting that they are under pressure to “jettison” services. Changes to hospital funding formulas mean that some hospitals are receiving less than 0% in order to shift money to other towns and hospitals are under pressure to centralize services into fewer locations. Patients are required to travel further to access care.

Finally, during the month of November – seven months into the fiscal year – LHINs began to publicly release funding on home care for this year. What is abundantly clear from CCAC deficits, wait times and cuts to clients, is that funding for home care -- home support and nursing -- is set at levels far too low to meet the existing waiting lists and new need from hospital offloading of more complex patients.

The list of cuts includes:

- More than 100 hospital beds slated to be cut.
- Home care clients increasingly waitlisted, referred to community agencies that cannot provide for all their needs or denied service.
- For-profit privatization of services from patient transport to physiotherapy to endoscopy and pain clinics.
- Closure of local maternal and pediatric care and other women’s services.
- Centralization of so-called “home care” services into private for-profit clinics to which patients have to travel.
- Cuts to operating rooms.
- Closure of physiotherapy, cardiac rehab, pain and audiology clinics.
- Nurses, health professionals and support staff workforce cut; fewer staff per person.
- Cuts to mental health clinics and services.
- Centralization of cancer and cataract treatments to fewer hospitals, forcing patients to travel further for care.
- In the most extreme case – Niagara – a proposal to close 5 community hospitals entirely before potential replacement with one hospital some years down the road.

Health service cuts are listed by region & community in the full Austerity Index report at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca The Ontario Health Coalition will be releasing regular updates of the Index.

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