

March 20, 2006
Attn: Assignment Editor

Ontario Doctors Send Open Letter to Premier McGuinty To Stop the P3 Privatization of Ontario's Hospitals

Ontario-wide – 73 Ontario doctors have signed onto a letter asking Premier Dalton McGuinty to stop the privatization of Ontario's hospitals through so called Public Private Partnerships, or P3s.

The McGuinty government has gone further than any other government in Canada in privatizing formerly public and non-profit hospital assets and services through P3s. There are at least 24 planned P3 hospital projects in Ontario, with 22 of them created entirely by the current government.

The release of this letter comes a week before the Ontario Health Coalition's Hamilton plebiscite (citizen-called referendum) asking Hamilton residents to vote to keep the four hospitals in Hamilton fully public and to reject P3 privatization. On Saturday March 25, over 80 voting stations will open across Hamilton garnering tens of thousands of votes. The results will be released to the media on Monday, March 27.

Says Dr. Ted Haines, one of the letter's authors:

"We looked at the peer-reviewed evidence in the most prestigious international medical journals. We informed the Premier that we are deeply concerned about the government's plans to impose privatized P3s on our hospitals. P3s have proved to cost more and to result in compromised services. Hospitals funded through P3s have almost invariably provided less capacity than the hospitals they are intended to replace.

"The funding mechanism promoted by the government, "Alternative Funding and Procurement", is a version of a Private Public Partnership, or P3 in which for-profit consortia take over financing, construction, facility management, maintenance and some hospital services for long term deals stretching up to 40 years. The companies often seek additional revenue through commercial land deals on public hospital lands, and service charges or user fees for patients and their visitors. This for-profit health industry has an interest in two tier healthcare from which they can take profit, further increasing the cost of healthcare.

"We are reminding the Premier of the findings of the Romanow Commission that looked at all the evidence regarding these private hospital deals. Mr. Romanow found that there was no evidence that these hospitals are better or cheaper. Moreover, he found them to be inconsistent with the values of Canadians and with the tenets of the Canada Health Act.

"We are calling on the premier to act in the public interest and use citizen's dollars responsibly. Hospital construction and services must be publicly funded and hospitals must remain fully publicly managed and serviced," concluded Dr. Haines.

The full letter is available on line at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca and www.hwcn.org/link/mrg

Press conferences will be held today Monday, March 20:
Ottawa – 11 am, in front of Royal Ottawa Hospital, 1145 Carling Ave.
Sudbury – 11 am, in front of Sudbury General, 700 Paris St.
Cornwall – 3 pm, in front of Cornwall Community Hospital, 840 McConnell St.

For more information: **Hamilton/Toronto/Ontario-wide** - Dr. Ted Haines 416-252-6471
Ottawa – Dr. Atul Kapur 416-441-2502 (leave msg., he will call back from Ottawa)
Matheson/Timmins – Dr. George Freundich 705-273-2333
Sarnia – Dr. Jim Mackenzie 519-337-4627
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P3 Hospitals Background

P3s Announced To Date

So far official announcements have been made confirming the McGuinty government's plans for hospital privatization at:

- Barrie Royal Victoria Hospital
- Belleville site of the Quinte Health Centre
- Grimsby West Lincoln Memorial Hospital
- Hamilton Health Sciences Centre (three sites)
- Hamilton St. Joseph's Hospital
- Humber River Regional Hospital
- Kingston General Hospital
- London Health Sciences Centre
- London St. Joseph's Hospital
- Markham Stouffville Hospital
- Mississauga Trillium Health Centre (two sites - Mississauga & Etobicoke)
- Mississauga Credit Valley Hospital
- North Bay's new hospital
- Oakville Halton Healthcare Services
- Oshawa Lakeridge Health
- Ottawa Montfort Hospital
- Sarnia Bluewater Health
- Sault Ste. Marie's new hospital
- St. Catharines new hospital
- Sudbury Regional Hospital
- Toronto Bridgepoint (formerly Riverdale) Hospital
- Toronto Salvation Army Grace (relocating to Markham)
- Toronto Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (1001 Queen W.)
- Toronto Humber River Regional Hospital

These join the previously announced P3s at the Royal Ottawa Hospital and Brampton's William Osler Health Centre.

On the P3 privatization alert list:

- Cornwall's new hospital
- Rouge Valley Health System (Scarborough & Ajax-Pickering)
- Toronto - Runnymede Hospital
- Woodstock's new hospital
- Kenora's new hospital

Ontario Health Coalition Plebiscite Campaigns

Hamilton is the fourth city-wide plebiscite held by the Ontario Health Coalition and their local chapters. To date, plebiscites have been held in St. Catharines, North Bay and Woodstock where residents voted 97 – 98% in favour of keeping their hospitals fully public and stopping the P3s. In each vote the percentage of the population participating has grown. The plebiscites are more than credible in size, those in North Bay and Woodstock garnered more votes than city councillors. Approximately 30,000 votes have been collected so far in the plebiscites. Tens of thousands more have already voted in advance polls in Hamilton. For more information: Ontario Health Coalition, 15 Gervais Drive, Suite 305, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1Y8 Tel: 416-441-2502 Fax: 416-441-4073 www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca ohc@sympatico.ca