

Save Public Medicare!
MEDIA RELEASE

**Private Clinic Aligns with Conservatives in Misleading Campaign
to Privatize Health System**

Toronto – The Ontario Health Coalition expressed deep concern about the misleading pre-election campaign underway by a for-profit surgical clinic and the Conservative Party. Yesterday's Globe and Mail contained a front-page story claiming that the for-profit clinic is bidding for hip and knee surgeries at a cheaper rate than public non-profit hospitals. The well-orchestrated privatization campaign claims that the provincial government's denial of a contract to the clinic is a refusal to reduce waiting lists.

"John Tory is engaging in a dangerous and disingenuous game of political bullying," said Natalie Mehra, director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "The Conservatives' "damn-the-consequences" approach to health care privatization is astoundingly short-sighted. John Tory's Conservatives aligned with a set of vested interests that pose a significant threat to the public health system. As we have seen across Canada and around the world, private clinics damage the public system. They cost more and take scarce health professionals out of the public system."

"Not only do for-profit surgical centres siphon key personnel away from regional public hospitals, they also "cherry-pick" the easy cases leaving public hospitals struggling with less staff to care for the heavy care patients. The chief of staff and other personnel in the Don Mills Surgical Centre are already splitting their time between public non-profit hospitals and their private business," noted Ross Sutherland, RN. "If you actually compare apples and apples – cases of similar complexity -- the private clinics cost more. Any complications - infections, bleeding, or patients who need intensive medical support - will be transferred to the public system. Training costs are borne by the public system. The private clinic does not have to pay for its errors, it simply takes public money for profit-seeking purposes. The overwhelming evidence is that - when not campaigning for privatization just before an election - private surgical clinics charge more than non-profit hospitals for the same procedures."

For a list of cost-comparisons, see our press release sent out on March 16 at:

www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

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