

Ontario Health Coalition

MEDIA
RELEASE

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Coalition Casts Doubt on Clement's MRI Numbers - Calls them "Unbelievable"

Toronto - The Ontario Health Coalition released a brief today on Health Minister Tony Clement's public claims about the planned for-profit MRI & CT clinics. The coalition charged that the government's publicly released figures with respect to the clinics are nonsensical. The clinics, according to the brief, cannot hold up to the Minister's claims of "faster, better, cheaper, safer" care. The coalition called for the Minister to immediately cease his reckless race to privatize as much as possible before the election.

GOVERNMENT CLAIM The Ministry has repeatedly claimed that it has increased hospital MRI hours by 90% with a \$28 million investment in the last year.

REALITY In the Estimates Committee meeting this fall, the Ministry did not know how many scans or hours had been increased because budget increases for MRIs were being used to cover scans already being performed but funded from other sources due to budget shortfalls. The funding may not have increased scans at all.

GOVERNMENT CLAIM The Ministry claims that the new for-profit MRIs will be 36% cheaper than the same services in hospitals.

REALITY The bottom line is that the government's figures are so far from possible realities as to be unbelievable. What we do know is, last year, each Ontario hospital provided approx. 10,000 MRI scans for \$1.2 million government funding. Based on the figures in the government RFP, it is reasonable to conclude that in one year, the for-profit clinics will likely provide 2,600 publicly-funded scans for \$700,000.

A look at hospital staffing trends in Ontario makes it clear that Ontarians are paying more for less. Details of hospital spending are not publicly accessible.

The other reality is that the clinics will not be providing the same services as hospitals. The proposals sought from private companies allow for cheaper equipment with less

features and software, incapable of doing the complex cases found in hospitals. The for-profit clinics will provide easier scans, leaving heavy care and risky patients to the public system.

"Ontarians should beware", concluded Mr. Sutherland. "This could be another Conservative government privatization in which the public ends up paying more for less."

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