

Ontario Health Coalition

MEDIA
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For Immediate Release
January 21, 2004

Extraordinary Secrecy Obscures Billion-Dollar P3 Hospital Deals

Toronto - The massive private (P3) hospital deals scheduled to be signed by the provincial government any day now are purposefully obscured by an astonishing lack of accountability and transparency, the Ontario Health Coalition charged in a media conference this morning.

"We have been trying for a year and a half to get the hospitals and the government disclose, even the first documents relating to the requests for proposals", noted Steven Shrybman, lawyer for the coalition and a group of unions who have launched a legal challenge against the P3 hospitals. "The government and hospitals are playing a shell game, joining cause in resisting the disclosure of records despite the major commitments of public funding to build the new hospitals. It is indefensible for government and public institutions to avoid disclosure simply to avoid public criticism."

"The Brampton Hospital will be accompanied by deep privatization of the services at four hospital sites. The public and the hospital workers have a right to know exactly which services will be privatized and whether there has been any study or consideration about keeping those services public," added Brad Philips of the Service Employees Union, representing front line workers at the William Osler Health Centre in Brampton. "The public should know whether the government has studied the higher mortality rates in private facilities, or the impact of the trade agreements relating to this privatization, or where the cuts will be made to make room for profits," he concluded.

"We have heard that the clinics in the P3 hospitals will be run for private pay patients in the so called off-hours. Since this increases two tier healthcare and pulls scarce personnel and resources out of the public health system, we have a right to a clear answer about whether or not this will be the case," added Pat McNamara of the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union, another party to the court case. "The public has a right to know if the privatization deals in these hospitals will increase two tier health care and allow new service charges."

"From the little information that has been released we do know that the deals will amount to over \$1 billion in public money and costs have been rising since the beginning," said Natalie Mehra of the Ontario Health Coalition. She concluded: "Surely the people of Brampton have the right to know how much money they will have to pay for their privatized hospital and 30 year long lease deal. Given that privatized hospitals are a fundamental policy change, and given the extraordinary cost and duration of these deals, the veil of secrecy that obscures them from public scrutiny is unjustifiable."

The coalition provided copies of documents requesting information over a 1 � year period to the media.

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