

# Ontario Health Coalition

## MEDIA RELEASE

March 20, 2000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Public Forum on Privatization Planned for May 2nd\*\* in Sudbury New Sudbury Health Coalition Formed

**SUDBURY** - On Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, representatives of the health, academic and labour communities in Sudbury met with members of the Ontario Health Coalition to discuss health care, privatization and the impact changes in our provincial health care system are having on people's ability to access care. During the course of the two-hour meeting, local activists decided that an important first step in the fight to preserve Medicare for the residents of Sudbury, was to form a Sudbury Health Coalition.

"Health care is near and dear to every Ontarians' heart," said Bobbie Cascanette of the Ontario Women's Health Network (Sudbury), and spokesperson for the newly formed group. "Access to care, regardless of income levels, is one of the fundamental principles of Medicare and it is being eroded at an alarming rate in this province. Recent media headlines have been focused on proposals for private hospitals in Alberta, but Ontario isn't far behind in the privatization race. Increasingly, Ontarians are paying out-of-pocket for health care through user fees, OHIP de-listing and budget cuts. More and more the for-profit sector is involved in the delivery of care through contracting out. In Ontario, it's privatization by stealth."

"Of particular concern to us is the pending divestment at Sudbury's Community Care Access Centre," said Cora-Lee Skanes of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), also a spokesperson for the Sudbury coalition. "Home care has been one of the key mechanisms for privatization in Ontario. The contracting out of services and the competitive bidding process have triggered a race to the bottom in terms of wages and benefits for front line workers and diminished levels of care for patients. We want to learn from the experiences of other communities and ensure that patients in our community receive the best possible care from every health care dollar. We want to keep profits out."

As a first step toward these goals, the Sudbury and Ontario Health Coalitions will hold a public forum on privatization in Sudbury on Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Details regarding the forum location and time will be released at a later date.

The Ontario Health Coalition is a province-wide advocacy organization whose mandate is to preserve and enhance a quality, single-tier public health care system and the principles of Medicare. The coalition is made up of more than 90 member organizations from across Ontario.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: 416-441-2502**

***(\*\* Subsequent to the release of this media advisory, the date of the forum was changed to Tuesday, May 9th, in order to make the event part of Sudbury's Health Awareness Week May 6th to 13th.)***