

Ontario Health Coalition

MEDIA
RELEASE

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Coalition says private operator not appropriate for mental health and addictions facility on Queen

TORONTO - The Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) and partners warned the City of Toronto Planning Committee today that plans for redeveloping the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) as a private corporation could harm the city's interests and put the mental health of its citizens at risk.

The OHC says the amalgamated Queen Street, Clarke Institute and Donwood, now known as CAMH, should remain publicly owned and not for profit. The current CAMH board plans to run CAMH as a private-public partnership (P3).

Natalie Mehra of the OHC said for-profit hospitals have been a disaster everywhere, including in Britain where P3 operators make huge profits at great cost to the public. "P3 is just a sneaky term for privatization. It means private companies control the service, and we pay. In Britain, studies show that P3 hospitals cost so much that they suck money out of community care and the rest of the health system."

Nancy Pridham, representing members of Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 500 said, "We are most concerned about what is behind this plan. It's an attempt by the private sector to make profits off some of the most vulnerable people in our society, mentally ill and addicted individuals."

Danielle Larmand of the Ontario Nurses Association, Local 048, said there were questions about the number of beds in the new plan. "Will adequate community supports be in place to serve these consumers?" she asked. "If not, what effect will this have on the city's housing, public health and community services budget?"

John Cartwright, Chair of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, said, "Councillors should ask themselves whether the city is prepared for the possible consequences of seeing this major asset being shrouded in the kind of secrecy that always surrounds these privatization schemes. This city needs affordable, publicly run

mental health services. We think the plan could work, but first we must think long and hard about the kind of deal that is really being proposed for the site."

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