



April 17, 2015
Attn: Assignment Editor

For Immediate Release

Hundreds Rally to Stop Health Care Cuts and Privatization in First Day of Action: Protests Planned Across Ontario

(Sudbury, Ottawa, Hamilton, Niagara, London) – In response to severe hospital cuts and the threat of privatization of home care and hospital services, organizations representing hundreds of thousands of seniors, patients, health care workers, nurses, health professionals and concerned citizens have joined forces to call for mass protests in each region of Ontario. The cross-province Days of Action were officially kicked-off at a noon hour rally today at the office of Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault.

In this, the eighth consecutive year of real-dollar decreases to community hospitals' global budgets, cuts are happening everywhere. Northeastern Ontario has been especially hard-hit by devastating hospital cuts in every major community. Maternity wards are under threat of closure; entire community hospitals serving hundreds of thousands of patients being closed down; outpatient clinics are being privatized, small town hospitals losing entire wards; large hospitals are facing deficits in the millions of dollars; and thousands of nurses, health professionals and hospital support staff positions being cut and eliminated. As public hospital services are being slashed, ownership and control over vital care is being privatized to for-profit companies, patients are hit with new user fees and two-tier health care is taking over. And with the recommendations of the government's panel on home care, the last remaining public and non-profit home care services are under renewed threat of privatization.

"We are joining regular Ontarians from every walk of life to work together to build mass protests in each region of Ontario to raise our voices together and insist that our political leaders stop the cuts and privatization of our health care," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "Our health care is funded by the people and it should be run for the people; not for profit-seeking companies and not at the whim of political leaders who have no mandate to dismantle vital local health care."

Sudbury's event is the first of four regional "Days of Action": mass regional protests and citizen action days to save our communities' public health care services. These four Days of Action will be the first set of events. More will be announced in coming months. Each Day of Action will be held at the constituency office of a senior Minister or MPP from the Ontario Liberal government in the region:

- Northeastern Ontario Day of Action
MPP Glenn Thibeault's office in Sudbury, 555 Barry Downe Road, Unit 4B, Sudbury Ontario
Friday, April 17, 12 p.m.
- Hamilton/Niagara Day of Action
Friday, May 22
- Ottawa and Region Day of Action
Friday, June 12
- Southwestern Ontario Day of Action
Friday, June 26



Quotes:

"We must send the message to all political parties that our health is not for sale. Too many people have fought too hard and too long to end up being left with so very little. Unlike this government, the people of Ontario think access to quality health care in their community is right and not a privilege. These hospital cuts are about two different sets of values, ours and theirs."

Michael Butler, Health Care Campaigner, Council of Canadians

"Patients and families are ending up in emergency wards after being discharged too soon from hospitals to inadequate homecare. We will be working with patient advocacy groups across the province to protest further cuts to hospitals and privatization of our services. In solidarity with hospital workers, health professionals, nurses and doctors we are joining the days of action to protect patient care in this province."

Julie Devaney, Patient with chronic care needs, Spokesperson for the Toronto Health Coalition

"Our coalition of senior citizens' organization is deeply disturbed at the dismantling of our most cherished social program Medicare. Hospitals are off-loading and out-sourcing health care services previously covered under OHIP. Patients are discharged quicker and sicker while home care, meant to sustain aging at home, is being cut and privatized. The alternative to the principles of the Canada Health Act is privatized for-profit health care where you get only what you can afford. Seniors who fought for the creation of Medicare in Canada will not go quietly into the night."

Derrell Dular, Managing Director, Older Canadians Network

"Unifor members will be joining in the OHC Days of Action in their communities to support access and ensure the quality and safety of these vital hospital services. Our hospitals in Ontario are critical to ensuring care for our growing and gaining population throughout the province. Adequate funding is essential to their ability to serve that role."

Katha Fortier, Ontario Director, Unifor

"The registered nurses of Ontario know the impact that cuts are having on our patients. We have seen the loss of almost half a million hours of highly skilled RN care from our hospitals in 2015 alone. As ONA members and RNs, we advocate for our patients. They depend on us to speak out to protect their care more than ever."

Linda Haslam-Stroud, President, Ontario Nurses Association

"Hospital staff are exhausted emotionally, seeing patients too frail and ill refused admission or sent home prematurely and abandoned, with a false promise that homecare will be in place for them. The Health Coalition's escalation of the campaign against the hospital funding cuts has our enthusiastic support."

Michael Hurley, President, OCHU/Canadian Union of Public Employees

"Families are not experiencing a transfer of services from hospital to community, but from hospital to privately paid settings outside of Medicare. This is not what Ontarians voted for."

Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

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