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For Immediate Release

Assignment Editors

**Thousands Demand Doug Ford Disavow Health Care Privatization and Cuts
Other Political Parties Respond Positively to Coalition's Demand for Services to be Rebuilt & Restored**

Toronto – “Hands Off Our Health Care” chanted a capacity crowd of an estimated 8,000 people who joined hands and encircled Queen’s Park today at the largest rally at the Ontario Legislature since Doug Ford became Premier earlier this year.

Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition told the crowd that Premier Doug Ford had been invited to the rally to disavow plans for cuts and privatization. Mr. Ford declined to attend and did not send the health minister and or anyone else in his stead. “In the short time since the provincial election, Doug Ford has cut OHIP+ and mental health funding,” Ms Mehra told the rally. “And has released a major report calling for means testing, user fees and privatization of health care and other services. This is intolerable. Ontarians are demanding that Mr. Ford live up to his promises and expand and restore services, not privatize them.”

Doug Ford alone was the only political leader to not address the rally.

John Fraser, Interim Liberal Leader and Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party pushed for more investment in the public health care system, not cuts. The message being sent to the Ford government was clear, expand care not cuts.

“Families want to know that when a loved one needs to visit the hospital, they won’t be stuck in a hallway. They need to know that a long-term-care bed will be there for an aging parent,” said Andrew Horwath, NDP, Leader of the Official Opposition.

Patients and advocates called for improvements to health care and seniors care, hospital overcrowding and homecare, including reopening closed hospital beds, a long-term care minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, and also that all new capacity in hospitals, long term care and community care to be built as public, non-profit services and not privatized.

Michael Hurley, President, OCHU/CUPE said, “The Ford government cut \$377 million in funding from mental health and addictions. It’s \$90 million in hospital surge funding replaces \$187 million - so it is cutting \$97 million. This government’s fiscal plans collide sharply with healthcare funding and we expect the closure of 3,000 hospital beds by the time the dust settles unless we push back hard. That is what we are firmly committed to do.

“Doug Ford did not mention privatization or health care cuts in the election. He has no mandate for these, We will keep coming back in larger and larger numbers until the cuts are stopped and health care service are improved and expanded,” said OPSEU First Vice-President/Treasurer Eddy Almeida.

“Premier Ford has to address the undeniable crisis in health care - patients are feeling it and health care workers are feeling it every day,” said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. “Pre-election, Doug Ford promised to end hallway medicine, but instead he’s hired former B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell, who slashed health care in favour of privatization. Unifor is here to say hands off our health care.”

More information:

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