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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Doug Ford cuts hospital beds and funding – calls it an increase

(Toronto) – Usually a major government announcement is in the media studio at the Legislature or somewhere public where the public can attend and media can ask questions. Today, Ontario Health Coalition spokeswoman, Natalie Mehra, was told by security that she wouldn't even be able to stand in the hallway outside where Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott were making a hospital funding announcement, even though the announcement was made in a government building which should be open to the public, and even though media had requested interviews after the announcement. In fact, not only was the Health Coalition told they must leave the area by security guards, this government announcement was made as a "photo op", not even press conference, so that the media was not allowed to ask questions of Premier Ford or Health Minister Elliott.

Today's hospital funding announcement is actually a re-announcement and a cut. This is a replay of what happened in the summer when the government cut more than \$330 million in mental health funding and tried to make it look like a new funding announcement.

The Ontario Health Coalition has spent the last 12 years campaigning to stop the hospital cuts and get action on Ontario's hospital overcrowding and undercapacity crisis. Ontario has the fewest hospital beds per capita [in Canada](#) and is third from the bottom of [the entire OECD](#). Ontario funds its public hospitals [at the lowest rate in Canada](#).

"The Ford announcement today is a re-announcement of the budget money that was announced by the Wynne government before the election, but worse, it is also a major cut," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "The Liberals committed \$187 million to keep open the 1,200 temporary hospital beds that they had opened last fall. Today, it appears that Doug Ford has cut that to \$90 million and 1,100 beds or less."

"Even with those temporary beds included, Ontario still ranks at the bottom of Canada in the number of beds per person," she added. "Doug Ford promised to end "hallway medicine" but this is the opposite – it is a cut. Mr. Ford must live up to his promise to voters and reopen closed hospital beds and restore services to deal with the crisis of overcrowding in our hospitals."

The Coalition noted that in October 2017, the Wynne government announced \$100 million - \$150 million to reopen hospital bed capacity. This money [funded 1,200 hospital beds](#) and an additional set of "transitional beds" (lower level of care, lower level of funding beds, all of which were temporary. In response to pressure, then Health Minister Eric Hoskins said he would seek approval from Treasury Board to extend them. In February 2018, Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced \$187 million would be in the 2018 Budget for the next fiscal year (2018-19 -- the year we are now in) to continue those 1,200 hospital beds past the election. Through the summer, the Ford government systematically rolled back many or most of the provisions of the 2018 budget. Today, Ford appears to have decreased the funding to \$90 million in his announcement for 1,100 hospital beds for one year.

"What matters most, is that this announcement is nowhere near what is needed to deal with the crisis of overcrowding and undercapacity in Ontario's hospitals," concluded Ms. Mehra. "Every other province in Canada does better in terms of the number of open hospital beds and hospital funding. There is no question that the Ford government can restore beds and services to meet the real needs of our communities."

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