

# ACTION Update



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## Ontario Health Coalition Launches Giant Ontario-Wide Referendum to Stop Private Clinics

### Major Campaign to Protect Public Community Hospitals from Cuts & Privatization

In our biggest campaign ever, more than a thousand volunteers are taking to the streets distributing leaflets door-to-door, holding votes in their workplaces, and dropping off materials to local seniors' and community service agencies. All of this mass outreach work will culminate in an Ontario-wide vote on Saturday April 5 on whether or not Ontarians want the government to cut our services from local hospitals and contract them out to private clinics.

This mailing includes a leaflet and mail-in postcard ballot. Please vote as soon as you can and mail in your postcard. If you want more materials to distribute, please email us as soon as possible.

At the beginning of January, Ontario's Wynne government brought in two new legal regulations that could have devastating consequences for our local community hospitals. The regulations would enable the government to cut local hospitals and hive off surgeries, diagnostics, and other procedures to a colony of private clinics.

The coalition has written a briefing note for our members, made a formal submission to the government and has met with the Premier about our concerns. Unfortunately, the Minister of Health is steamrolling ahead with her privatization scheme.

Key facts:

- Ontario's hospitals have already been cut more deeply than any other province in Canada, and more deeply than just about anywhere in the "developed" world. We have the fewest hospital beds; extremely short lengths-of-stay; low staffing levels; and more services done on an outpatient basis. We have the worst hospital overcrowding of any country we could find.
- Private clinics are a real threat to Public Medicare. They charge user fees and extra-bill patients for services that we have already paid in our taxes and that should be covered publicly. Many of these charges are illegal under the Canada Health Act.



Photo: Clifford Skarstedt/Peterborough Examiner

Ella MacCulloch is holding a giant ballot while young Thomas Zhler holds a ballot box, in this photo taken as Peterborough area volunteers launched the referendum campaign on private clinics in their area. Coalition co-chair Roy Brady is standing in the middle with more volunteers in the background.

- Patients are being illegally charged more than \$1,000 for an MRI, more than \$20,000 for hip surgery and more than \$1,000 for cataract surgery, in private clinics, in violation of the Canada Health Act.
- Private clinics have much less oversight and control regarding safety and quality of care. There have been serious quality problems in Ontario's private clinics and oversight is inadequate.
- Private clinics take funding, scarce specialists, health professionals and nurses from local hospitals, and they only treat the healthiest patients, leaving the heaviest patients behind with fewer resources to care for them.

## RAISE THE ALARM!

### March 31 National Day of Action event list next page >

On March 31, the National Health Accord expires. Instead of renewing the Accord, the Harper government is planning major cuts to health care. \$36 billion is being removed from provincial and territorial health-care systems by 2024. Harper will eliminate the equalization transfers for health care to have-not provinces and they will reduce the federal share of health-care spending from what was once 50 per cent to a mere 18 per cent. But most Canadians don't know about it. Come out to a "raise the alarm!" event near you!



# Ontario Events

## March 31 Day of Action

**Ottawa** Funeral procession to mourn the death of Canada's Health Accord on Parliament Hill at 12 noon For more information: Marlene at [marlene\\_rivier@rogers.com](mailto:marlene_rivier@rogers.com) or 613-222-8392.

**Kingston** "HONK FOR HEALTHCARE" car parade 12 noon. Meet at the tourist information office at the bottom of Fort Henry Hill. For more information: Ross at [elbe@web.net](mailto:elbe@web.net) or 613-532-7846

**St Catharines** "Raise the Alarm" demonstration with alarm clocks, bells, horns and pots and pans. From 4-6pm outside the office of Conservative MP Rick Dystra, 61 Geneva Street. St Catharines. Contact Sue Hotte at [suehotte@yahoo.ca](mailto:suehotte@yahoo.ca) or 905-932-1646.

**Oshawa** "Raise the Alarm" demonstration with alarm clocks, bells, horns and pots and pans. 12 noon Outside the office of Conservative MP Colin Carrie Lord Simcoe Place ▪ 57 Simcoe St S, Oshawa Contact Charlie Courneyea at [wccourneyea@gmail.com](mailto:wccourneyea@gmail.com) 416-557-5935 or Trish McAuliffe at [tmcauliffe@rogers.com](mailto:tmcauliffe@rogers.com) 905-436-0665

**Toronto** Rally and Raise the Alarm and HONK FOR HEALTHCARE Meet at Queen's Park at 12 noon March down University Ave to Dundas St. alongside taxis driving down, honking for healthcare Contact Emily Smith van Beek at [ohc@sympatico.ca](mailto:ohc@sympatico.ca) or 416-441-2502.

EVENING: "Artists for the Accord" night of music and performance. 8pm. The lineup will include Brent Carver, Tony award winning actor and Shirley Douglas. The Trinity St. Paul's Centre. 427 Bloor St W, Toronto. Contact David Craig at 416-271-3030 or [davidscraig@rogers.com](mailto:davidscraig@rogers.com)

**Scarborough** "Raise the Alarm" Rally with alarm clocks, bells, horns and pots and pans. From 3-6pm on **\*\*Monday, March 24<sup>th</sup>\*\* not the 31<sup>st</sup>.** Outside the office of Conservative MP Roxanne James 1450 Midland Ave, Suite 211 Scarborough. Contact Kingsley Kwok at [mercury28@gmail.com](mailto:mercury28@gmail.com) or 416-835-3377.

**Orillia** "Raise the Alarm" Rally with alarm clocks, bells, horns and pots and pans. 12 noon outside the office of Bruce Santon, Conservative MP Simcoe-North 575 West Street South, Willow Court Plaza, Unit 12 Orillia. Contact Emily Smith van Beek at [ohc@sympatico.ca](mailto:ohc@sympatico.ca)/ 416-441-5202.

**Sarnia** "Raise the Alarm" Rally with alarm clocks, bells, horns and pots and pans. 12 noon outside the office of Conservative MP, Patricia Davidson, 1000 Finch Dr., Sarnia. Contact Arlene Patterson at [arlene.patterson13@gmail.com](mailto:arlene.patterson13@gmail.com) 519-542-1895.

**North Bay** "Raise the Alarm" Rally in front of MP Jay Aspin's Office, 100-133 Main St W, North Bay. Contact Henri Giroux, [hgiroux1@hotmail.com](mailto:hgiroux1@hotmail.com)

## B.C. Private Clinic Brings Court Case to Topple Medicare in Canada

"We are at risk of losing Medicare in 2014" warns the B.C. Health Coalition.

Just as Ontario's government is moving to expand the private clinics sector, a private clinic owner in B.C. has mounted a dangerous legal attack before the courts that could turn Canada's Medicare program into a US-style system – without the public having any say.

The attack is driven by Dr. Brian Day, owner of a Vancouver for-profit clinic known for unlawfully billing taxpayer and patient money. Dr. Day is on a reckless campaign to replace Canada's Medicare with a US-style system, and he's using the courts to do it.

The case is being called the most significant constitutional challenge in Canadian history. And it's going to trial in BC Supreme Court in 2014.

**If Dr. Day wins this case, we'll lose the public health care system that our families rely on.**

Doctors will be able to set any price that they want. Expensive private insurance will become the new norm like in the United States where the cost to insure an average family of four is \$16,000 a year - and that's if you're lucky enough to have a job that provides it. The direct cost to an employee is \$4,500, and deductibles are about \$1,000. Can your family afford an extra \$5,500 a year?

Most bankruptcies in the US are due to medical bills – we don't want to see a Canada where we risk losing our homes or go deep in debt when we get sick or injured.

When more for-profit delivery becomes part of a public system, we know that doctors and nurses are drained from the public system to the for-profit system. That means that waits will become much longer for the rest of us while the elite get preferential access.

**It's a national issue affecting all of us in Canada**

Even though the case is in BC, it threatens health care for all of us. If Dr. Day wins the case, the laws that protect our public health care system will crumble across the country. We have to make sure Dr. Day's case is defeated. Canadians take pride in a system that looks after all of us when we need it – we don't want US-style health care.

There are real solutions to the challenges we face that won't compromise the values of fairness and access to good health care for all.

**We're fighting to save our public health care system!**

The BC Health Coalition and Canadian Doctors for Medicare are interveners in this case. The OHC is working on a national solidarity committee to help. For more info: [www.savemedicare.ca](http://www.savemedicare.ca)