

Ontario Health Coalition

15 Gervais Drive, Suite 305, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1Y8

Tel: 416-441-2502 Email: ohc@sympatico.ca www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

For Immediate Release
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Ontario-Wide Tour to Visit 15 Communities Warning of Ontario Budget Cutbacks to Health Care

Most Ontarians don't realize that the McGuinty government's recent "austerity" budget will catapult the health system into another round of cuts and restructuring. With this warning, the Ontario Health Coalition is launching a 15 city tour across Ontario to prepare citizens to stand up and protect local access to health care services.

"The government's budget for health care is worse than even the most radical of recommendations. With the harsh new budget, the government is planning another major round of cutbacks and restructuring that will particularly hurt patients who need hospital care, nursing home placements, outpatient clinics and long-term care," said Natalie Mehra, director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

"We are holding a town hall meeting to discuss the government's plans and what they might mean for our local communities. We don't want to see any more hardship as a result of patients unable to access the care they need," Mehra said. "With the town hall meeting, we will launching an action plan to protect each region's health services from further cuts."

"There is no question that we can succeed in protecting needed care in our local communities," Mehra concluded. "But to do so, we need to be prepared and vigilant."

The coalition hopes that all community members who care about preserving public health care services will join the town hall meeting to hear updates about the budget cuts, give their input, and plan the fight-back campaign. Town hall meetings will be held in the following communities:

Niagara

Thursday May 10 at 7:00 pm - Royal Canadian Legion A.C. McCallum Branch 479, 5603 Spring St., Niagara Falls

With: Hugh Mackenzie, economist; Cathy Carroll, SEIU; Susan Schmidt, CUPE; Wayne Gates, municipal councillor; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Sue Hotte, Niagara Health Coalition.

Hamilton

Saturday May 12 at 1:00 pm - St. Peter's HARRRP Community Centre, 705 Main St. E.

With: Dr. Gordon Guyatt; Dianne Leclair, Ontario Nurses' Association; Cathy Carroll, SEIU; Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Steve Buist, award-winning reporter, Hamilton Spectator.

Toronto

Monday May 14 at 1 – 3 pm, Toronto City Hall Council Chambers, 100 Queen St. W at Nathan Phillips Square

****Special meeting sponsored by the Alliance of Seniors to Protect Canada's Social Programs & the Older Canadians Network "Back to the Future: Real Alternatives to the New Austerity Agenda"**

Featuring: Jim Stanford, economist; John Sewell former Mayor of Toronto and founder of Citizens for Local Democracy; and Natalie Mehra Ontario Health Coalition director and recipient of the 2012 Alexander Gorlick Humanitarian Award.

Kitchener

Monday May 14 at 7:00 pm - Royal Canadian Legion (Polish) Branch 412, 601 Wellington St. N.

With: Hugh Mackenzie, economist; Vicki McKenna, Ontario Nurses' Association; Shawn Rouse, CAW Health Council president; Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Orville Thacker, seniors' advocate.

Oshawa

Tuesday May 15 at 7:30 pm - Northview Community Centre, Gymnasium, 150 Beatrice St. E.

With: Dr. Reuben Roth, professor Laurentian University; Dianne Leclair, Ontario Nurses' Association; Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director.

London

Wednesday May 16 at 7:00 pm - King's College, Labatt Hall Rm. 105, 266 Epworth Avenue.

With: Vicki McKenna, Ontario Nurses' Association; Michael Shapcott, Wellesley Institute; Sandi Blancher, OPSEU; Peter Bergmanis, CAW; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Philip McLeod, former editor, The Londoner.

Peterborough

Thursday May 17 at 7:00 pm - Peterborough Public Library, Auditorium, 345 Aylmer St. N.

With: Dennis Howlett, Canadians for Tax Fairness; Sara Labelle, OPSEU; Marion Burton, Labour Council president; Roy Brady, Peterborough Health Coalition co-chair; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Mike Lacey, News Editor, Peterborough This Week.

Kingston

Wednesday May 23 at 7:00 pm - Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic High School Cafetorium, 130 Russell Street.

With: Kathleen Lahey, Queen's University law professor; Dennis Howlett, Canadians for Tax Fairness; Sara Labelle, OPSEU; Michael Hurley, OCHU/CUPE; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director.

Cornwall

Thursday May 24 at 7:00 pm - Navy Veterans Club, 30 6th Street East.

With: Dennis Howlett, Canadians for Tax Fairness; Anne Clark, Ontario Nurses' Association; Ross Sutherland, RN, M.A.; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Elaine MacDonald, Cornwall municipal councillor

Ottawa

Saturday May 26 at 1:00 pm - Ottawa Public Library, Auditorium, 120 Metcalfe St.

With: Dennis Howlett, Canadians for Tax Fairness; Anne Clark, Ontario Nurses' Association; Ross Sutherland, RN, M.A.; Marlene Rivier, OPSEU; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Pauline Tam, health and medical issues reporter, Ottawa Citizen.

Matheson

Monday May 28 at 7:00 pm - Floyd Hembruff Civic Centre, 387 Hwy. 11

With: Dr. Gayle Broad, Algoma University; James Moffatt, Sheet Metal Workers' Union; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Ben Lefebvre, Northeastern Ontario Health Coalition.

Sault Ste. Marie

Wednesday May 30 at 7:00 pm - The Moose Lodge, 543 Trunk Road.

With: Dr. Gayle Broad, Algoma University; Rob Giovagnoli, CAW; Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director.

Thunder Bay

Thursday May 31 at 7:00 pm - Waverley Resource Library, 285 Red River Road.

With: Trish Hennessey, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Diane Parker, Ontario Nurses' Association; Kari Jefford, CAW; Mary Cory, OPSEU; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director.

Kenora

Saturday June 2 at 1:00 pm - Best Western Lakeside Inn, Cascade Room, 470 First Ave. S.

With: Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director and Michael Hurley, OCHU/CUPE. Emcee: Shelley Bujold, producer, CJBN

Sudbury

Tuesday June 5 at 7:00 pm - Royal Canadian Legion Branch 76, 1553 Weller St.

With: Dr. Gayle Broad, Algoma University; Manny Carvalho, SEIU; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. Emcee: Carol Mulligan, health reporter for the Sudbury Star

Windsor

Wednesday June 6 at 7:00 pm - CAW 195/2458 Union Hall, 3400 Somme Avenue.

With: Jim Stanford, economist; and Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director.

For more information: Kim Johnston, campaign organizer, 416-548-4069; Natalie Mehra, director, 416-230-6402 (cell) or Ontario Health Coalition main office, 416-441-2502.