

Ontario Health Coalition

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Attn: Assignment Editor

Health Coalition Calls on McGuinty Government to Stop NHS Privatization Plan in Welland

Niagara -- The Niagara Health System is planning to close about 120 hospital beds at the Welland Hospital. The beds are housed in a wing of the Welland hospital that includes an "extended care unit" and a "long-term care unit". This hospital wing will be closed. After closing the beds, the hospital plans to sell off the license to operate these extended care and long-term care beds to a private company, which may or may not re-open the beds at a time and place of its choosing.

"Last week, Welland municipal councillors met with Health Minister Deb Matthews with a proposal to strengthen the Welland site of the Niagara Health System," said Sue Hotte, Niagara Health Coalition chairperson. "Far from strengthening the Welland site, the NHS proposal to close the long term care wing at the Welland hospital is further proof of the intention of the NHS to cannibalize our regional hospitals. The Health Minister must intervene to protect these services at the Welland hospital."

"The McGuinty government has run two elections on a platform of protecting public health care," noted Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director. "The closure of another 120 beds in the NHS and the proposed transfer of the license to operate these beds to a for-profit company is a direct abrogation of that promise. For-profit long term care homes have poorer hours of care for residents. They put profit-taking before patient care and staff concerns. The McGuinty government said that it would strongly support public/non-profit health care. We are calling on McGuinty to intervene and stop the NHS privatization plan in Welland."

"The people of Niagara are angry that the provincial government has routinely turned a blind eye and allowed – even facilitated – devastating cuts to local hospital services," concluded Sue Hotte. "A new page must be turned if any of our local hospitals is going to survive."

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