



Open Letter to All Ontario MPPs

November 23, 2017

Dear Members of Provincial Parliament,

We are writing to urgently draw your attention to a bill before our Legislature that holds very grave implications for all Ontario communities. Bill 160 is an omnibus piece of legislation that repeals or enacts 7 Acts and amends more than 30 Acts. The Bill has been brought in with no prior public consultation despite its far-reaching ramifications. We have a number of concerns with the Bill as it is drafted but we are taking the exceptional step of writing an open letter to every Member of Provincial Parliament because we are deeply concerned about Schedule 9 of the Bill.

Schedule 9 repeals the *Private Hospitals Act*, the *Independent Health Facilities Act* and the *Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act*. It replaces them with euphemistically named "Community Health Facilities". These changes cover more than 900 private clinics -- more than 98 percent of which are not "community health facilities" but are in fact private for-profit clinics and often chain-owned -- and 6 private for-profit hospitals.

The Private Hospitals Act was brought in in 1973 and banned all future private hospitals. It empowers the Minister of Health to have wide latitude in oversight of private hospitals, and in particular, enables the Minister to revoke licenses and refuse transfers. These powers are critically important. When one of the largest for-profit multinational mega-health companies in the world tried to move in and buy the Shouldice Hospital, advocates were able to ask the Minister to intervene under this Act. Crucially, the Private Hospitals Act has effected a ban on private hospitals for 44 years in this province.

Schedule 9 of Bill 160 lifts the ban on private hospitals and does not replace it. Without due consideration, the government is rolling in private hospitals, which allow admissions and overnight stays, with private clinics which do not. This has very dangerous implications. The definition is left to the regulations. Further, an appointed person in the bureaucracy will have the power, with the stroke of a pen, to bring in new private clinics and, now, since they are rolled into the Act, private hospitals. Problems under the current private clinics regime include: patient deaths; serious safety breaches that have risked, among other things, potential infection of more than a thousand patients with HIV/AIDs; other serious health care quality concerns; for-profit privatization of our local hospital services; new user fees for patients in violation of the Canada Health Act; unnecessary testing, and others. None of the problems under the current legislation is improved under Bill 160 Schedule 9, including oversight, inspections and safety regime, for-profit privatization and user fees for patients. Virtually everything is left to regulation. Key clauses in the existing pieces of legislation have been dropped, including vital public protection against user fees for patients and safety protections for ionizing radiation (x-rays).

We consider this a top priority issue. If the government lifts the 44-year ban on private hospitals in Ontario and brings in permissive legislation to privatize Ontario's hospital services, we will do our utmost to stop it. We do not want to have to go down that road and are asking for your help in getting Schedule 9 withdrawn at the beginning of next week. Thank you for your consideration of this serious issue.

Kind Regards,

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Executive Director

Ross Sutherland
Chair