

Health Coalition Exposes Significantly Higher Costs & Irregularities in Kingston Hospital Cataract Surgery Privatization: New Report

The privatization of cataract surgeries in Kingston, Ontario, costs 56% more than if the same procedures had been done in a public hospital, reports the Kingston Health Coalition (KHC).

The KHC's new report, [*A Clear-Eyed Analysis of Cataract Surgery Privatization*](#), examined two years, November 24, 2021, to September 30, 2023, of Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC) privatizing cataract surgeries to a private for-profit chain, Focus Medical Ancillary (FMA). The cost to the health care system was \$2,036,779, a 56% increase over what it would have cost to perform the same services in the public hospital.

The data was compiled from documents released after Freedom of Information requests. "The private cataract surgery contract means \$2 million is lost to the public health system. Instead, these funds were used to build up a more expensive for-profit health care provider," commented Ross Sutherland, KHC co-chair and author of the report. "On top of the increased cost, the \$2 million spent supporting a more expensive private facility is ultimately outside the control of the hospital or government. It is subject to the workings of the market. The company could go bankrupt or move on, either way taking the benefit of that public investment."

"The 56% increase in cost over doing the surgeries in the public hospital is public money that could have been spent opening unused hospital operating rooms, retaining and expanding staff, or funding cataract surgeries in a smaller, nearby, regional hospital, such as in Napanee."

The Coalition also found that the KHSC-FMA contract lacks transparency, an ongoing problem with public money being spent on for-profit corporations. The private corporate partner is not clear. Proper extensions in the contract are in doubt. Is it a temporary "occupancy agreement", or a more in-depth long-term privatization? And, what options, like opening closed hospital operating rooms, were considered?

Possible conflicts of interests in the creation of the privatization contract were identified and the approval of the contract appears to violate the procurement directives under the Public Sector Accountability Act.

"Without transparency there cannot be public accountability and trust that decisions are being made in the public's interest not for private for-profit interests," argued Joan Jardin, the other KHC Co-Chair. "To begin to establish trust in the system, and stop the waste of public money, the private cataract surgery contract needs to be ended as soon as possible."

The full report can be found at: <https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/release-report-health-coalition-exposes-significantly-higher-costs-irregularities-in-kingston-hospital-cataract-surgery-privatization-new-report/>