

Ontario Health Coalition

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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Budget Announcement Outlines Wholesale Hospital Privatization: Health Coalition Outraged at Betrayal

Toronto – The Ontario government has announced its intention to bring in a 5 year infrastructure plan with today's budget that includes their intention to privatize all new hospitals.

On Monday, Infrastructure Minister David Caplan made clear the government's plan to embrace private finance and lease-back deals (known as P3s or "public private partnerships") for all new infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and water. Minister Caplan was forced by reporters to admit that the privatization deals will cover hospitals, though public title will be retained.

These P3 deals vary slightly in model, but all include privatization of the finance and operation of public services. The P3 hospitals proposed, include:

- for-profit corporate takeover of the hospital facility management
- privatization of hospital services from patient records to portering and disinfection
- commercial development of public lands
- 30 - 60 or more year privatization deals in which the public hospital board gives up control over these services, management and lands and makes payments to private for-profit corporations in long term lease or mortgage deals

This P3 hospital privatization is deeper than any since the inception of the public health system in Ontario and marks the continuation and expansion of the former Conservative government's privatized P3 hospitals, which Dalton McGuinty promised to stop during the election campaign.

Yesterday, in the legislature, Conservative MPP Jim Flaherty congratulated the Liberal government on continuing the Harris/Eves Conservative agenda of privatization of the public sector by continuing the P3 program.

"The Liberal government has announced its intention to bring in the wholesale privatization of all new hospitals," stated Dora Jeffries, coalition co chair. "The model of private P3 hospitals proposed are just like the Conservatives' P3 hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. We are outraged at the betrayal of promises to stop the Americanization of our hospital system. We are outraged at the game of semantics that this government continues to play in its attempt to cover up their plans."

"This is privatization by stealth", added Eduardo Sousa, Council of Canadians Ontario coordinator and coalition board member. "The government has announced that it intends to give up hospitals, water systems, schools and other public services to be run by multinational for-profit corporations. This generation-long privatization will lead to diminished services, high costs and endless legal battles like we have seen over toll hikes on Highway 407."

"There has been no public consultation whatsoever by this government about the massive giveaway of billions of dollars in public hospital infrastructure", concluded Natalie Mehra, coalition coordinator. "We have been subject to obfuscation and deception dating from before the provincial election right through the last two years. We intend to build community campaigns to oppose every private hospital. We know the public wants our hospitals kept public and non-profit."

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