



For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Desk

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Unprecedented Health Action Day Calls on Doug Ford to Halt Health Privatization Plans

Toronto – For the first time, more than 150,000 health professionals, nurses, support workers, doctors and tens of thousands of patient advocates are joining together in a Health Action Day, unified in their deep concern that the Ford government intends unprecedented health care privatization. In hospitals and other health facilities tens of thousands will wear a sticker that says “Stop Health Privatization” and will distribute leaflets warning about the Ford government’s health care restructuring plans. Patients and advocates are holding leafletting events across Ontario, organized by the Ontario Health Coalition. The Action Day is happening in more than one hundred hospitals and health care facilities.

“The Ford government has given itself unprecedented powers to order the privatization of virtually all health care services and leaked documents show that privatization plans are already underway,” warned Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition in a press conference at the Ontario Legislature. “Now they are cutting half-a-billion from OHIP services, cutting Public Health, restructuring and privatizing ambulance services, imposing funding constraints on hospitals and health care. We are hearing from thousands of people who are upset and angry at the betrayal. We will not allow them to cut and privatize health care. This is just the beginning of the fightback.”

“Ontario nurses are extremely concerned that the government’s restructuring plans will mean less access for our patients and their families to quality clinical services in public hospitals, more user fees and fewer RNs and health professionals to provide their care,” reported Vicki McKenna, President of the Ontario Nurses’ Association whose members have joined the Health Action Day.

“It is now clear that a wide range of hospital clinical and support services, ambulance services and labs are targeted for privatization; that all new long term care beds will roll out in the private sector and that 3,000 new hospital beds will be built in privately owned and operated hospitals,” warned Michael Hurley, President of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions representing support staff, nurses, health professionals, paramedics, PSWs and other health care workers across Ontario. “Today’s joint action by 150,000 healthcare staff underlines all of the evidence that privately delivered health services are much more expensive and come with higher death rates than publicly delivered services. Working with community allies we are building the resistance to the privatization of health services.”

“The debate on privatization is over, it simply doesn’t work,” said OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas. “It’s the pay more get less plan and it’s appalling that governments would waste tax dollars and end up short changing the people they serve.”

“Though it is evident that secret plans have been underway for months, Mr. Ford has no mandate whatsoever for health care privatization, restructuring, cuts and upheaval,” concluded Naureen Rizvi, Ontario Regional Director of Unifor, representing nurses, PSWs and support staff across Ontario. “It is Mr. Ford’s Achilles heel: he has no mandate for privatization of health care. To Ontarians, it is unacceptable that a government that never breathed the word “privatization” in the election and now, barely a year into its mandate, rolls out a complete plan to restructure, centralize, cut and privatize our health care services. Ontarians, no matter their political stripe will not stand for this and we will work in partnership with patients and communities to protect our health care services as a top priority.”

The Health Coalition is mobilizing for a major Health Care rally outside the Ontario Legislature next week on Tuesday April 30 at noon. The rally is expected to draw thousands concerned about OHIP cuts, hospital cuts, privatization, mergers and centralization of health care services.