

Ontario Health Coalition

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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

Up to 23 New Hospitals to Be Privatized Under Government's 5-Year Infrastructure Plan: Coalition Launches Major Plebiscite to Keep Hospitals Public

Toronto/St. Catharines – Today the Ontario government released its 5-Year privatization plan for the province's hospitals. The Plan was released on the heels of the launch of a major anti-P3 plebiscite in St. Catharines to keep the community's new hospital public. The plebiscite is the first in a series planned for communities across Ontario where hospital projects are at risk of privatization.

The government's plan, called "ReNew Ontario 2005 – 2010" - available at <http://www.pir.gov.on.ca> – sets out the following plan for hospitals:

- 66 projects over 5 years. 30 – 35% (approx. 23) of these are large and complex. The report says, "a significant number of large complex projects will be financed and built using alternative financing and procurement methods" *pp.* 7. This means that the plan is to privatize up to 23 hospitals through P3s.
- the completion of 39 current projects (financing mechanism unclear, we are working on getting more information).
- re-announcement of MRIs and investment to upgrade cancer treatment equipment.
- between the privatized finance, the local community fundraising and an unspecified share paid by the provincial government, the total cost will be \$5.3 billion. Note: this does not mean that the province has announced an investment of \$5.3 billion in healthcare. In fact, they have announced that they will not invest in, and therefore will privatize, up to 23 hospitals.

"The government is planning the unprecedented privatization of up to 23 hospitals across Ontario," said Natalie Mehra coalition coordinator. "Health coalitions across the province are moving into high gear to defend our community hospitals from privatization. This week we have launched a P3 plebiscite in St. Catharines. Next week we will hold cross-province press conferences and launch a major new Toronto P3 campaign. We will continue until the government keeps its election promise and stops the privatization of our hospitals."

"Nurses, teachers, hospital workers, seniors, community members and students joined together this week to launch the first community-wide stop-P3 plebiscite. Our goal is to get tens of thousands of community members to vote on June 25 to keep our St. Catharines hospital public," said Sue Hotte, Niagara Health Coalition co chair. "Our community believes in public services – not in health care for profit. We voted for change in the last election and we will not stand by and allow the privatization of our hospital."

"Minister Caplan has skewed the facts and ignored overwhelming evidence in his attempt to justify this privatization for which he has no public mandate", noted Dora Jeffries, coalition co chair. "The government would have us believe that private companies are going to give billions of dollars, take the majority of the risk and give up control of the assets for which they have paid. These claims are beyond credibility. In fact, the global experience with P3s is that they are more expensive, lead to cuts in services, and result in expensive legal disputes and loss of public control. Our communities will suffer while multinational corporations take millions out of our health system for their own profit."

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Background Information available on our website at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca:

A new report "100 P3s flawed, failed and abandoned" that looks at 100 P3 projects and raises questions about Minister Caplan's assertion that privatized infrastructure projects are "on time and in budget".

A report "Public options for financing infrastructure" in which economist Hugh Mackenzie outlines credible options to finance hospitals publicly.

