



Health Coalition responds to shocking attack, calls on Health Minister to desist & instead answer for non-action on private clinics with the gravitas the issue deserves

Toronto – Ontario Health Coalition executive director Natalie Mehra responded with the following letter to statements made on the Health Minister’s behalf by her spokespeople. The Coalition has been contacted by some media outlets for a response to the shocking tone and allegations in the statements.

Letter to the Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health, June 26, 2025:

“We are writing to you in response to statements made on your behalf by your spokespeople Ema Popovic and Hannah Jensen. The statements contain broad mischaracterizations of the Ontario Health Coalition and our work.

Last week, we issued a formal complaint including details from fifty patients who had been extra-billed in private clinics. This follows other media releases the Coalition released in 2024 containing reports from patients who were victims of extra-billing and user fees in private clinics, as well as reports about the unprecedented local hospital and emergency department closures across Ontario.

In response, your spokespeople have stated that the Ontario Health Coalition is “NDP-backed”, and, “has spent over a decade [or longer] accomplishing nothing while standing ideologically opposed to any innovation in our health system”.

These statements are false and defamatory.

Minister, the issues we have raised are serious public policy issues, deserving of a thoughtful response. The tone of your response is shocking and unacceptable. People who raise issues and concerns to a democratic government in the public interest should not be subject to vitriol and ad hominem attacks. They also should not be subject to deliberate falsehoods or misrepresentation.

The Ontario Health Coalition is non-partisan as per our [mandate](#). We are a collaborative organization that advocates for improvements in health care in the public interest and to protect public health care, and we work with organizations and political parties who support these goals. It is false to allege that the Health Coalition is partisan, receives funding, or has any kind of formal ties to any particular political party. Currently, we enjoy the support of all three opposition parties in the Ontario legislature for our work in advocating against local hospital closures, the expansion of for-profit clinics, and the extra-billing of patients. We have also worked with MPPs and leaders in the PC party during times when they advocated for improvements in access, funding and services.

The Ontario Health Coalition has had a significant impact on public policy under governments of all stripes for forty years -- including in the last decade -- having successfully saved emergency departments, birthing units and entire hospitals from closure; stopped cuts; won restored funding; stopped privatization; won amendments in the public interest to dozens of pieces of legislation; forced disclosure of vital data; protected patients’ rights and successfully advocated for improved accountability; raised key issues to the top of the public agenda, and much more.

We remind you of the key issues we raised last week. They are that Ontario patients are being charged fees of hundreds to thousands of dollars when they go to private clinics, including the clinics owned by private corporations that your government has funded and expanded. Those fees are illegal under Ontario’s Medicare protection laws and violate the Canada Health Act. They are resulting in hardship and suffering. Elderly patients report using their life savings, their grocery money, and even having to go back to work long after retirement to pay the fees. Despite headline-grabbing

promises by Premier Ford to the contrary, the fact is that patients are having to pay with their credit cards in addition to their OHIP cards.

The so called “innovation” of for-profit privatization of Ontario’s public hospital services such as surgeries and diagnostics is not working and it is not necessary. Ontarians already paid to build operating rooms in their public hospitals that are sitting unused the majority of the time because of a policy choice not to give them the funding to expand their hours of operation. We are calling on you to stop the redirection of funding and human resources away from our public hospitals and stop the private clinics.

Finally, it appears that you did not consider the complaint before issuing your statement. If you look, you will see that the patient to which your spokesperson referred in one of her statements already made a complaint to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare section of the Ministry of Health after the patient was charged at a private clinic last October. To date, nothing has happened. That is the point of our formal complaint and media work. Nothing is happening to the vast majority of private clinics where patients are being extra-billed and charged user fees in violation of our Medicare protection laws.

We are still looking for a substantive response on the actual issues. We hope that you will give them the gravitas they are due. Please cease and desist with the false and defamatory statements.”