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## **Patients Who Have Been Extra-Billed Thousands of Dollars in Ontario Private Clinics Join Advocates to Call Out Ford Government's False Claims**

Toronto – Leda Raptis from Kingston was charged \$2,000 for an MRI at a private clinic. She needed the MRI for open heart surgery. When she looked at the bill, the clinic said the charge was for “contrast”. Either way, the two thousand dollar charge is illegal in Ontario and in Canada.

Leda was joined in a press conference this morning at the Ontario Legislature by Chris from Sarnia, who was charged \$2,000 when she went to a private for-profit clinic for cataract surgery and then another \$1,800 for a follow up surgery. Cathy from Niagara was charged \$100 for a medically necessary liver scan at a private for-profit clinic. Judy Wolanski's husband, from Sarnia, was turned down for hernia surgery from the private for-profit Shouldice Hospital because he had COPD and they told him to go to a facility better suited to deal with a potential medical emergency. He had his surgery as a day surgery in a public hospital without complications and with no extra charges.

These four patients joined advocates from the Ontario Health Coalition to call out the Ford government's claim that their plan to privatize Ontario's public hospitals' core services – surgeries and diagnostics – would not result in extra user charges for patients.

“Doug Ford's claims are patently untrue. They have been in government for five years and have never used their existing powers to crack down on private clinics extra-billing patients, manipulating them into buying all kinds of medically unnecessary procedures and tests, and violating the laws that protect public medicare,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “Why would any Ontarian believe this government? They have not once held for-profit health care corporations accountable so far, not even for negligence, death, illegal extra-billing and selling medically unneeded services to seniors.”

Under the Canada Health Act, patients are protected from extra-billing and user fees. Such charges are banned and all medically necessary hospital and physician services are covered by public medicare (OHIP). A patient cannot be charged for a medically necessary surgery no matter what facility performs it. Nor can a patient be charged for a needed diagnostic test. Private clinics cannot attach a medically unnecessary service to a medically necessary surgery or test in order to extra-bill patients. They cannot manipulate patients into paying by pretending unnecessary services are necessary. The Ford government could have fined the private clinics and doctors in violation of the Canada Health Act and Ontario's Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act (2004). It has not done so and does not need new legislation to do so. It simply needs to actually enforce the law.

In fact, the Coalition reported that under the Ford government privatization of Ontario's health care has expanded dramatically and user fees for patients have proliferated. The Coalition demanded that Ford stop the privatization of Ontario's public hospitals, noting that virtually every public hospital in Ontario has operating rooms that are closed in the evenings, on weekends, for months or even permanently due to underfunding. ([Ontario funds its hospitals at the lowest rate in Canada.](#)) The Coalition called on the government to resource and use the capacity in our public hospitals to clear backlogs and improve access. For a fact checker and brief case studies of 20 patients who have been extra-billed thousands of dollars in private clinics in Ontario recently, please go to: <https://bit.ly/3lzvN6i>