

Update on Bill 74: Ontario's health system overhaul

Our public health care system is under attack. Bill 74, the People's Health Care Act, has now been passed giving the government extraordinary powers to privatize health care services and force through mega-mergers, amalgamations, transfers of services and the closure of critical services.

This legislation could pave the way for a two-tiered health care system and harm patient care. It establishes a health care "Super Agency" known as Ontario Health, to be forged out of 20 existing agencies with widely varied mandates, including Ontario's 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, Trillium Gift of Life Network, Health Shared Services Ontario, Health Quality Ontario and HealthForce Ontario Marketing and Recruitment Agency.

Members of the Super Agency's Board of Directors – who are appointed, not elected, come from industries that will benefit from more privatization. They will have immense powers to order the wholesale remodeling of our local hospitals, long-term care, home care, community care, mental health care, health clinics, and the health care system at large,

with little to no accountability to the public or the communities they are meant to serve.

Bill 74 isn't about improving patient care or ending hallway medicine. It's about siphoning public dollars into private pockets. It runs contrary to the principles of our public health care system, where care is provided based on need, not one's ability to pay.

This Bill also has serious implications for labour relations, especially regarding successor rights where health care services are transferred and/or amalgamated. This will undoubtedly result in labour strife, as unions fight to protect their members' rights. It also overrides employees' layoff, termination, and severance rights when they are transferred from one employer to another.

This entire legislative process was flawed, without a meaningful process for public consultation. Despite monstrous changes to Ontario's health care system, frontline workers, patients and the public have had little to no input on Bill 74.

We must stand up to the Ford government to say: no more cuts, no more privatization!

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Serious threat of privatization

Ontario's Minister of Health has given herself and the Super Agency vast new powers to privatize most of our health care services. When asked by Opposition parties about private clinics bidding to take over public hospital services, neither the Premier nor the Health Minister will deny it.

Leaked documents revealed the government's plan to privatize eHealth, laboratories, air ambulance, long-term care inspections and more.

The threat of cuts and impending privatization is serious.

Health care cuts to-date

- Surge funding for hospital overcrowding eliminated. Surge beds are now closed without replacement, despite an ongoing overcrowding crisis. (Fall-Winter 2018/19)
 - Overall health funding set at less than the rate of inflation, population growth, and aging. Service levels cannot keep up with population need and complexity. (2019 Budget)
 - Plans to cut half a billion dollars in OHIP services revealed. On the chopping block are sedation for colonoscopies, chronic pain management services and others. (April 2019)
 - Obstetrical care cut on weekends at West Lincoln Memorial. Women need to travel to Hamilton if they go into labour on weekends. (February 2019)
 - Services at South Bruce Grey Health Centre privatized, including microbiology testing, transcription, the Seniors' Centre of Care and patient transportation. (January 2019)
 - Pediatrics and obstetrics-gynecology services cut at the Birchmount campus of Scarborough Health Network (formerly the Scarborough Grace General Hospital), which serves 200,000 residents. (January 2019)
 - 165 full-time positions cut at London Health Sciences. (June 2019)
 - Outpatient lab services at North Wellington Health Care privatized and contracted-out to for-profit LifeLabs laboratories.
- And more...

