

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Cuts to health care hurting Ontarians



Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown introduced a motion Oct. 21, calling on the Liberal government to restore funding to physician services of \$815 million and return the missing Federal Canada Health Transfer funding of \$54 million back into Ontario's health care system.

Unfortunately, by voting down the motion, the Liberal government chose politics over putting Ontarians first.

I have heard concerns over the impact cuts to funding for physician services will have on patients in Ontario. In a letter the Premier, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and I received from a new family physician practising in Dufferin-Caledon, she outlines the negative impact the cuts to physician services will have on patients in her group practice. She noted that they are considering letting go some staff that help coordinate referrals for patients along with communicating to patients over the phone their results. In her letter, she stated if these changes are made, it will actually cost the government more money due to an increase in visits by patients. She also noted that their own blood lab may become unaffordable to maintain. This is concerning, because as she pointed out, there is only one other blood lab in the community. In addition, they are considering cutting other services they offer, such as performing biopsies. Soon they will be notifying their patients about the changes, and as she states "we will be explaining the truth to them as to why we need to make these changes so that they will understand that it is a consequence of your government's cuts."

Last week, I questioned the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, calling for the need to restore funding to physician services and highlighted the physician's letter.

This government's decision to claw back funding for physician services highlights the ongoing problems with our health care system due to the government's cuts. This government has cut \$54 million of the federal Canada Health Transfer from Ontario's health care budget; \$815 million from physician services; \$50 million from physiotherapy services for seniors; and 50 medical residency positions across the province. Patients will be the ones who suffer as a result of these cuts. Ontario is already facing a shortage of physicians, and approximately 800,000 Ontarians are without a family doctor. The Auditor General reported that Ontarians across the province are receiving different levels of care depending on where they live, and that nearly half of all spending by the 14 CCACs in Ontario does not even go toward face-to-face treatment for patients in Ontario.

It is becoming increasingly clear that our health care system is failing Ontarians as they will experience longer wait times for surgeries, doctor appointments and emergency room visits, due to the government's ongoing cuts. The people of Ontario deserve a government that invests in frontline health care workers and makes patient-centred care a priority. The PC caucus and I will continue fighting for Ontarians who deserve a world class health care system that offers the highest levels of care.

-30-