

Overcrowding at Brampton Civic getting worse, NDP?maintain

Ontario New Democratic Party Leader Leader Andrea Horwath released new information recently that shows chronic overcrowding at Brampton Civic Hospital has only gotten worse in 2017, with occupancy rates in acute care stuck at more than 100 per cent and reaching as high as 109 per cent.

Horwath said it's time for a government that's focused on improving the health care Ontario families are getting ? not one that cuts it. ?Too many Bramptonians know first hand that the day Brampton Civic Hospital opened, it was already overcrowded,? Horwath said. ?Can you imagine if it was your child in the waiting room for hours, or your mom laying in a hallway because there are no rooms left??

?Kathleen Wynne has turned her back on patients and the front line healthcare workers that treat them,? she added. ?The cuts have gone too far, in Brampton and across the province.?

Horwath released numbers her office obtained through Freedom of Information requests that show Brampton Civic Hospital's Acute Care and Mental Health beds operated above safe capacity throughout 2017.

?These aren't just numbers,? she maintained. ?These are Ontarians left waiting in pain on stretchers in hallways, with no privacy and sometimes, not even any food.?

?Hallway medicine and long wait times are potentially dangerous, they're painful and they're stripping Ontarians of their dignity,? she added.

Horwath was joined by Sunanda Dhanna who was a patient at Brampton Civic Hospital recently and who described her experience and frustration with how she was treated.

?I spent two and a half days on a stretcher in various hallways at Brampton Civic,? said Dhanna, a registered nurse practising at Trillium Health partners. ?I was shuffled from hallway to hallway, once at one o'clock in the morning. I had no privacy, I couldn't sleep because the hallways are so loud and busy, and I didn't even get a meal for the first day and a half. What is happening to our hospitals is unacceptable ? something has to be done.?

The Ontario Hospital Association said recently that hospitals were careening toward crisis this winter, and called on the Wynne Liberals to provide immediate emergency funding for hospitals.

While Wynne and the Liberals have forced years of cuts and freezes on hospitals, including a \$300 million shortfall this year, Patrick Brown's Progressive Conservative predecessor started the downward spiral. The last Conservative government fired 6,000 nurses, closed 28 hospitals and slashed more than 7,000 hospital beds.

Health care is a priority for Horwath. She said she's committed to properly funding Ontario hospitals at a rate that, at minimum, keeps up with inflation, population growth and the unique health needs of the communities. Horwath has demanded that the layoffs of nurses and frontline care providers stop, and has introduced a plan to create Ontario's first universal prescription drug program. Providing drug coverage for everyone ?regardless of age, income or health history ? can improve health outcomes, and reduce pressure on hospitals and emergency services.