

970 Lawrence Ave West
Suite 500
Toronto, ON M6A 3B6
adrianna@aohc.org

April 11, 2014

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier
Government of Ontario
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
Premier@ontario.ca

Re: Medical Tourism

Dear Premier Wynne,

We are dismayed by our government's apparent support for the active pursuit of 'medical tourism'.

As health service providers committed to a public health care system which ensures universal care based on need not ability to pay, we are deeply concerned by the seemingly open approval by Minister Matthews of a system that allows medical tourists to gain special access to the health care system. The public wants, and needs, a clear signal from you that it is *not* "open season" on our operating rooms and clinical facilities.

Premier, by taking a hands-off approach when public hospitals announce plans to offer fee-based medical services to foreign patients, Ontario risks stepping onto a slippery slope toward a two-tier system of healthcare where a parallel for-profit system provides care to those who can afford to pay. For now, that program is restricted to people from abroad. But it was not without cause that BC private clinics welcomed medical tourism as the gateway to two-tier care, calling two-tier "impossible to prevent" once medical tourism came to town.

Quebec's Health Minister called this practice "unacceptable", stressing that the services of hospitals, doctors, nurses and other health professionals funded by provincial taxpayers should be focused on meeting the province's health needs rather than being made available for sale to affluent buyers from foreign countries.

The resources funded by the residents of Ontario must remain focused on meeting the healthcare needs of people in Ontario who are on waitlists and in ER hallways. Deloitte's experts in medical tourism already tell us that to compete in the global health marketplace we need to reorient our infrastructure, invest in marketing and branding and price our services to compete. All of these practices draw resources away from providing the best care to Ontarians.

They also distort the duties of our health care system's leadership, reorienting them to consider both a patient's need AND ability to pay.

We call on our government to protect Ontario's public healthcare system, to focus on need- not ability to pay, and to close the door on two-tier healthcare. Please end this experiment and say that Ontario is closed to Medical Tourism.

Yours with regards,

Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD (hon), LLD (hon), O.ONT.
Chief Executive Director, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

Adrianna Tetley
Chief Executive Officer, Association of Ontario Health Centres

Dr. Danyaal Raza, MD, MPH (candidate), CCFP
Canadian Doctors for Medicare

Juana Berinstein
Director of Policy and Communications, Association of Ontario Midwives

Ritika Goel, MD CCFP
Medical Reform Group

cc. Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long Term Care
Andrea Horwath, MPP. Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario
Tim Hudak, MPP. Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario
Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association